

Section 1:

**E-mails regarding
policy development**

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
[DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Attachments:
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:07:37

Morning [REDACTED]

I am issuing this out to targeted consultees today (and yourself) and wondered if you could take a look at it to make sure I haven't overlooked anything from a user perspective. Not sure whether to put in that the draft policy is currently also being consulted on with secretariat staff and trade union side.

Thanks
Maria

Good afternoon,

Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy

As part of the Assembly Commission's Gender Action Plan, a draft Trans Policy has been developed. The draft Policy includes Frequently Asked Questions and is also accompanied by a Glossary of Terms, Guidance for Managers and Guidance on Visitors.

We would like to hear your views on the draft Trans Policy and associated documents, which are attached. You can submit your comments by completing the attached response form. You can also contact the Equality Manager if you wish to hold a virtual meeting via MS Teams or Zoom by emailing maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk.

The pre-consultation period will run until **from Monday 4 October to Monday 1 November 2021**.

We would encourage you to participate in the pre consultation exercise for this important policy and wish to assure you that all pre consultation responses will be considered. Following completion of the pre consultation exercise, the HR Office and Equality Unit will review the responses received and proposed amendments will be considered by the Assembly Commission's Secretariat Management Group.

It is anticipated that the '*Guidance on assisting and supporting trans visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings*' element of the draft policy will be issued to external consultees in January 2022 for an 8-week consultation.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Equality Unit.



MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

Room 417
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

[REDACTED]

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:44:14

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We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind Regards

Equality and Good Relations Unit.



MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

[REDACTED]

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:45:45

Good afternoon,

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[REDACTED]

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: 'info@transgenderni.org.uk'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:46:33

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Kind Regards

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MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: 028 904 18377
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
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From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: 'info@saini.com'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:47:21

Good afternoon,

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We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind Regards

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MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: 'info@rainbow-project.org'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:48:19

Good afternoon,

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We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind Regards

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MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

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From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: 'info@genderessence.org.uk'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:50:13

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We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind Regards

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MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

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Room 417
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From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: ['focustheidentitytrust@gmail.com'](mailto:focustheidentitytrust@gmail.com)
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:50:52

Good afternoon,

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email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:51:42

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Equality Manager

work: 028 904 18377
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

Room 417
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
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BT4 3XX

[REDACTED]

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: 'trans@belfastbutterflyclub.co.uk'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:52:29

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Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: 'info@affirmni.co.uk'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 04/10/2021 11:53:31

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From: [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
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From: Bannon, Maria
Sent: 04 October 2021 11:59
To: 'admin@cara-friend.org.uk' <admin@cara-friend.org.uk>
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy

Good afternoon,

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Stormont
Belfast
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My working pattern is 8am – 1.30pm Monday to Friday.

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: ['Focus The Identity Trust'](#)
Subject: RE: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy
Sent: 05/10/2021 08:14:53

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your response which is very helpful and will assist us in reviewing the draft policy.

Kind Regards

Maria Bannon

From: Focus The Identity Trust [mailto:focusidentitytrust@gmail.com]

Sent: 04 October 2021 18:53

To: Bannon, Maria <Maria.Bannon@niassembly.gov.uk>

Subject: Re: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy

Dear Ms Bannon,

While we at Focus:The Identity Trust welcome this draft policy and the opportunity to respond, we object in the strongest possible terms to the repeated use of the term 'trans' instead of 'transgender' throughout these documents. We highlight that the term 'transgender' is used by the World Health Organisation, which explains: *There is a growing commitment in public health to understand and improve the health and well-being of transgender people and other gender minorities, who comprise an estimated 0.3–0.5% (25 million) of the global population. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its pledge to “leave no one behind” has given renewed impetus to this movement.*

Transgender is an umbrella term that describes a diverse group of people whose internal sense of gender is different than that which they were assigned at birth. Transgender refers to gender identity and gender expression, and has nothing to do with sexual orientation. The term is increasing in familiarity globally, although other culturally specific terms may be used to describe people who have non-binary gender identities.

We refer you also to WPATH (the World Professional Association for Transgender Health):

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health promotes the highest standards of health care for individuals through the articulation of Standards of Care (SOC) for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People.

To use the term 'trans' to refer to transgender individuals is to rob those who transition in gender of their dignity. It is a term that is also found in general parlance to be used in an imprecise way. We would expect that a document or a suite of documents intended to protect and promote the rights of transgender people would wish from the outset to ensure rather than to undermine their dignity.

While the term 'intersex' appears in the glossary here provided, we find no reference to intersex individuals in the actual text of these drafts. This is a great disappointment and we consider it to be an opportunity that, should these documents be ratified as they stand, will be lost.

We would hope that you find this response to be relevant and of some assistance to you and we look forward to hearing from you in due course.

With regards

[REDACTED]

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: 'policy@HERENL.org'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Transgender Policy
Attachments: [DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Sent: 05/10/2021 12:11:26

Good afternoon [REDACTED]

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The pre-consultation period will run **from Monday 4 October to Monday 1 November 2021**.

We would encourage you to participate in the pre consultation exercise for this important policy and wish to assure you that all pre consultation responses will be considered. Following completion of the pre consultation exercise, the HR Office and Equality Unit will review the responses received and proposed amendments will be considered by the Assembly Commission's Secretariat Management Group (SMG).

Internal consultation on the draft policy and associated documents is currently underway with secretariat staff and trade union side (TUS). It is anticipated that the '*Guidance on assisting and supporting trans visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings*' element of the draft policy will be issued to external consultees in January 2022 for an 8-week consultation.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind Regards

Equality and Good Relations Unit.



MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

Room 417
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

[REDACTED]

From: [Martin, Karen](#) on behalf of [Martin, Karen](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Bannon, Maria](#)
Subject: RE: Consultation on draft Trans Policy
Sent: 29/10/2021 10:00:27

Thank you [REDACTED]

This is the final day of the staff consultation, although there have been very few comments from staff to date. Once Maria and I have considered your response, those from the external consultation and from our staff, we will come back to you.

Maria and I have also discussed the use of Trans/Transgender and issues arising from the Nolan investigation and I anticipate that there may be changes to the Policy arising from this.

We will be back in touch with you in due course and hopefully we can get the final policy agreed shortly (and allow us to move on to Menopause!).

Kind regards

Karen

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 October 2021 09:12
To: Martin, Karen <Karen.Martin@niassembly.gov.uk>
Cc: Bannon, Maria <Maria.Bannon@niassembly.gov.uk>
Subject: Consultation on draft Trans Policy

Hi Karen,

Apologies in the delay in getting back to you on this policy. NIPSA really welcome the development of this policy. I have met with Maria and sought advice from NIPSA HQ and I can confirm that TUS are content with the approach that Maria has suggested. TUS think that it is a sensible approach to dissect the policy and create one that is underpinned by legislation for transgender and one that is policy guidance for others based on the determination of the organisation. I only received a small number of comments in relation to the draft policy. One query was in relation to the policy title and that the policy should be Transgender Policy rather than Trans. Another query was raised in relation to the definitions used in the policy and with the backdrop of the Nolan investigation into Stonewall. TUS believe that Maria has sorted this issue. The final point that a number of comments were raised with me was in regards to toileting use. Safe spaces for women was something that was specifically identified. Again, the approach that the Assembly are taking in relation to toileting facilities is a sensible one.

I thought I would have had more feedback on this policy from across our membership, hopefully that means that the majority of our members are fully supportive of the direction of travel.

I would be happy to discuss or review any re-drafts of the policy at the appropriate juncture.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [NIPSA Branch 181 | Northern Ireland Assembly](#)
E: [REDACTED] Room 28

Northern Ireland Assembly | Parliament Buildings | Ballymiscaw | Stormont | Belfast | BT4 3XX



From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: Stewart, Richard; [Martin, Karen](#);
Subject: Draft Transgender Policy external pre-consultation
Attachments: [011121 HERe NI response Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm Here NI.docx](#);RE: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy;RE: Consultation on draft Trans Policy;Trans Policy draft consultation timeline.docx;
Sent: 03/11/2021 09:14:29

Morning Richard and Karen

As you are aware the external pre-consultation on the draft transgender policy ended on Monday 1 November. We received responses from:

- Affirm NI, and
- HERe NI

In advance of our meeting on the 9 November, I attach the responses for your consideration. In relation to what happens next, I have also attached the policy development timetable.

Karen, if possible would we be able to get a collated copy of the staff responses so as we can consider all responses at the meeting on the 9 November?

TUS has also made a response to Karen which I have attached.

Kind Regards

Maria



MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

Room 417
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX



From: [Martin, Karen](#) on behalf of [Martin, Karen](#)
To: [Bannon, Maria](#); Stewart, Richard;
Subject: Trans Policy Consultation
Attachments: [Staff Consultation Comments on Draft Trans Policy and supporting documents.docx](#)
Sent: 03/11/2021 14:42:14

Maria, Richard

I have attached the comments from staff on the draft Policy and supporting documents.

Kind regards

Karen



KAREN MARTIN
Deputy Head of Human Resources
Human Resources Office

work: [028 90521355](tel:02890521355)
mobile: [07775 423867](tel:07775423867)
email: Karen.Martin@niassembly.gov.uk

406
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BT4 3XX

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: Stewart, Richard; [Martin, Karen](#);
Subject: draft transgender policy - pre-consultee comments
Attachments: [081121Transgender - Preconsultaton external table and draft replies docx.docx](#)
Sent: 08/11/2021 12:53:21

Hi Richard and Karen

In preparation for our meeting tomorrow please see attached a table which breaks down the comments received from external pre-consultees. As we need to respond to consultation comments, I have also inserted draft responses which we can discuss tomorrow. It may also be useful to add the staff and TUS comments to this table so as we have all consultation comments and responses in one place for our purposes. Not to pre-empt the meeting tomorrow but I think it may be sensible to do the following:

1. Review the policy and guidance leaving only information relating to transgender
2. Insert the legal definition of Transgender into the draft policy
3. Review the consultation comments and draft responses – approval and when these can be issued to external pre-consultees
4. Decide when, or if, a formal response needs to be issued to staff or via TUS

Kind Regards

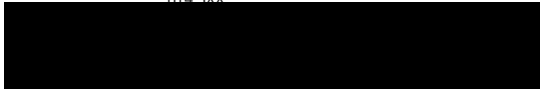
Maria



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Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: Stewart, Richard; [Martin, Karen](#);
Subject: draft Transgender Policy and related guidance
[111121 Combined consultaton comments -staff and preconsultees.docx](#);V101121 CLEAN VERSION draft Transgender GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS.docx;V101121 CLEAN VERSION draft transgender GUIDANCE FOR VISITORS.docx;V101121 CLEAN VERSION Draft Transgender Policy.docx;V111121 CLEAN VERSION draft Transgender GLOSSARY OF TERMS .docx;
Attachments:
Sent: 18/11/2021 14:02:01

Hi Richard and Karen,

Following our meeting on 9th November I have reviewed the draft Transgender Policy, draft Guidance for Managers, draft Guidance for Visitors and the draft Glossary of Terms and attach 'clean' copies for you to review. I have amended the draft policy and guidance based on consultee comments, which I also enclose. I have prepared responses to consultee responses and would be grateful if you could also review these (attached). I have drafted a request for legal advice based on issues we discussed on the 9th November, and as a result of a few consultee responses. The draft is currently with Richard to review, however I did meet with Simon Kelly last week to explain the issues that we would likely need some legal advice on.

Next steps:

November:

- Karen and Richard to review the draft policy, related guidance and draft responses to consultees and come back to Maria with any changes to allow the draft policies etc. to be submitted with the legal advice. Maria to make changes and re-issue to Karen and Richard.
- Maria to prepare the screening form and SMG cover paper within the next 2 weeks as the draft policy is scheduled to go to SMG in December.
- Richard to review the draft legal advice submission and submit to legal if content (with the reviewed policies, consultee comments and noted SMG papers).

I think that it everything for now.

Kind Regards

Maria



MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: 028 904 18377
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the bottom portion of the contact information.

From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: Stewart, Richard
Subject: RE: Transgender consultation
Sent: 24/02/2022 12:46:29

Hi Richard,

Yes, this was the version that HR issued to staff and would have been the version I also would have issued to external groups for version control. The copy I sent you is from Karen and is what was issued out to staff via the system.

Maria

From: Stewart, Richard
Sent: 24 February 2022 12:44
To: Bannon, Maria
Subject: RE: Transgender consultation
Thanks Maria
Is this what went out to the external groups as well?
Richard



RICHARD STEWART
Director of Corporate Services
Corporate Services

work: [02890521760](tel:02890521760)
mobile: [07766904374](tel:07766904374)
email: richard.stewart@niassembly.gov.uk

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BT4 3XX

I have sent this email at a time that is convenient for me and I'm not expecting a response outside of your normal working hours.

From: Bannon, Maria <Maria.Bannon@niassembly.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 February 2022 11:59
To: Stewart, Richard <Richard.Stewart@niassembly.gov.uk>
Subject: Transgender consultation

Hi Richard,

As requested, please see attached draft Transgender Policy (and guidance) issued to staff via HR for staff consultation.

Many thanks

Maria



MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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From: [Bannon, Maria](#) on behalf of [Bannon, Maria](#)
To: Stewart, Richard
Subject: Confidential: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Transgender Policy
[DRAFT Trans Policy for consultation V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Glossary of Terms V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance for Managers V270921.docx](#); [DRAFT Trans Policy Guidance on Visitors V270921.docx](#); [Draft Trans Policy ConsultationResponseForm.docx](#);
Attachments:
Sent: 24/02/2022 12:49:42

Richard
Here is an example of what I issued to external transgender groups
[Maria](#)

From: Bannon, Maria
Sent: 05 October 2021 12:11
To: 'policy@HERENI.org'
Subject: Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Transgender Policy

Good afternoon Danielle,

Pre-consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Trans Policy.

As part of the Assembly Commission's Gender Action Plan, a draft Trans Policy has been developed. The draft Policy includes Frequently Asked Questions and is also accompanied by a Glossary of Terms, Guidance for Managers and Guidance on Visitors. We would like to hear your views on the draft Trans Policy and associated documents, which are attached. You can submit your comments by completing the attached response form. You can also contact the Equality Manager if you wish to hold a virtual meeting via MS Teams or Zoom by emailing maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk.

The pre-consultation period will run **from Monday 4 October to Monday 1 November 2021**.

We would encourage you to participate in the pre consultation exercise for this important policy and wish to assure you that all pre consultation responses will be considered. Following completion of the pre consultation exercise, the HR Office and Equality Unit will review the responses received and proposed amendments will be considered by the Assembly Commission's Secretariat Management Group (SMG).

Internal consultation on the draft policy and associated documents is currently underway with secretariat staff and trade union side (TUS). It is anticipated that the '*Guidance on assisting and supporting trans visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings*' element of the draft policy will be issued to external consultees in January 2022 for an 8-week consultation.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind Regards

Equality and Good Relations Unit.



MARIA BANNON
Equality Manager

work: [028 904 18377](tel:02890418377)
email: maria.bannon@niassembly.gov.uk

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Stormont
Belfast
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From: [+HR Services Public Email](#) on behalf of [+HR Services Public Email](#)
To: [\ALL Secretariat Staff DL \(Admin\)](#)
Subject: Staff Hanbook Update
Sent: 08/03/2023 11:55:00



The Assembly Commission's new Transgender Policy has been added to the Staff Handbook and can be found in [Section 6.10](#).

The Policy is intended to ensure that staff who intend to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment, are treated with fairness and are supported in order to create a workplace that is safe and inclusive to all staff. It will also provide managers with support and guidance to assist staff undergoing gender reassignment. Further information in relation to training to support the Transgender Policy will be provided shortly.

A staff consultation took place in November 2022 and a summary report from the consultation can be found [here](#).

As always, please contact the Human Resources Office if you have queries on this new Policy or the Staff Handbook in general.

Kind regards,

Human Resources Office

From: [+Equality Public Email](#)
'trans@belfastbutterflyclub.co.uk'; 'admin@cara-friend.org.uk'; [REDACTED]
Bcc: 'thefocusidentitytrust@gmail.com'; 'info@genderessence.org.uk'; 'policy@HEReni.org'; 'info@sailni.com'; 'info@rainbow-project.org'; [REDACTED] 'info@transgenderni.org.uk'; 'info@transprideni.com'; [McDonnell, Sinead](#); [Martin, Karen](#); [Bannon, Maria](#);
Subject: Consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings
Attachments: [Consultation questions - draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings_.docx](#)
Sent: 16/03/2023 18:01:05

Good afternoon,

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission agreed its Transgender Policy for Staff on the 28 February 2023. We would now like to hear your views on the draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings, which is attached.

You can submit your comments by completing the attached response form and returning it to equality@niassembly.gov.uk

The consultation period will run **from Monday 20 March to Monday 15 May 2023**. Should you wish to receive the attached document in hard copy, or in an alternative format, please do not hesitate to contact us using the email address above.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind regards,

Equality Officer

From: [+Equality Public Email](#)
'trans@belfastbutterflyclub.co.uk'; 'admin@cara-friend.org.uk'; [REDACTED]
Bcc: 'info@genderessence.org.uk'; 'policy@HEReni.org'; 'info@sailni.com'; 'info@rainbow-project.org'; [REDACTED] 'info@transgenderni.org.uk'; 'info@transprideni.com'; [Martin, Karen; Bannon, Maria](#);
Subject: RE: Consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings
Attachments: [Consultation questions - draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings_.docx](#); [Draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings.docx](#);
Sent: 02/05/2023 14:30:54

Dear Consultee,

This is a reminder that the consultation on our draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and Other Users of Parliament Buildings closes on Monday 15 May 2023. You can submit your comments by completing the attached response form and returning it to equality@niassembly.gov.uk.

If you would prefer to receive the attached document in hard copy, or in an alternative format, please do not hesitate to contact us using the email address above.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind regards,

Equality Team

From: +Equality Public Email
Sent: 16 March 2023 18:01
Subject: Consultation on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings

Good afternoon,

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission agreed its Transgender Policy for Staff on the 28 February 2023. We would now like to hear your views on the draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings, which is attached.

You can submit your comments by completing the attached response form and returning it to equality@niassembly.gov.uk

The consultation period will run **from Monday 20 March to Monday 15 May 2023**. Should you wish to receive the attached document in hard copy, or in an alternative format, please do not hesitate to contact us using the email address above.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Kind regards,

Equality Officer

Section 2:

Research/briefing paper



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

Paper 00/000

23 September 2022

NIAR 084-22

Progress and Implications of the Northern Ireland Assembly Gender Action Plan

Michael Potter

This paper summarises progress on the Northern Ireland Assembly Gender Action Plan, considers impacts and draws some comparisons with equivalent measures in other legislatures.

This information is provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Assembly staff in support of their duties, and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as professional legal advice, or as a substitute for it.

Introduction

This paper has been prepared for the Gender Action Implementation Group. Following a request from the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission in 2013 that gender issues be considered in relation to the Assembly Secretariat, a Gender Action Steering Group was established. The first Gender Action Plan (2016-18) was approved by the Commission in 2016¹. A Continuing Gender Action Plan (2019-23) was approved in 2019.

This paper considers the following:

1. Outstanding gender issues raised within business areas of the Assembly Secretariat;
2. Implications of recommendations of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) for Assembly Commission staff; and
3. Actions undertaken in relation to gender equality in other legislatures.

The paper commences with a summary of the Gender Action Plan to provide context.

¹ [Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Gender Action Plan](#) web pages, Northern Ireland Assembly website.

1 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Gender Action Plan

This section summarises the content of the Gender Action Plan, the Continuing Gender Action Plan, and measures for implementation.

1.1 The Gender Action Plan

The aims of the Assembly Commission Gender Action Plan 2016-18 were as follows²:

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

The Action Plan comprised a suite of actions aimed at addressing specific identified issues, grouped under three themes:

Theme 1: Leadership and Management

- Mentoring and coaching
- Gender balance in presenting to the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) and Commission

² [Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Action Plan 2016-2018](#), p.23.

- SMG and Commission deputising guides
- Tabling of papers at SMG and Commission
- Gender balancing on groups
- Training
- Continued focus on equal pay
- Implementation of relevant AERC review recommendations (see Section 3)

Theme 2: Communication and Engagement

- Gender leadership network
- Awards
- Utilise existing Assembly networks

Theme 3: Life Balance/Health and Well-being

- Job share register
- Caring responsibilities guidance
- Job sampling
- Childcare scheme
- Gather staff views on life balance
- Domestic violence policy
- Development of a transgender policy
- Raised awareness around transgender issues

Progress was to be monitored by a Gender Action Implementation Group, with updates to the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) every six months and to the Equality Commission annually.

The Action Plan is reproduced at Appendix 1.

A Closure Report notes that 36 of the 39 actions in the Action Plan had been completed³. Two actions – the development of a transgender policy and associated staff training – had not been completed within the timescale. A third action – the creation of an Assembly Trainers Network – was suspended while the Assembly was not carrying out its full range of functions.

The Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23 has 13 actions⁴. This Action Plan is reproduced at Appendix 2.

1.2 Actions of the Continuing Gender Action Plan

There are 3 actions under Theme 1 (Leadership and Development), 7 under Theme 2 (Communication and Engagement) and 3 for Reporting and Monitoring. An additional action was added in October 2019. The March 2022 update of the 14 actions is at Appendix 3. These actions are considered in turn.

1.2.1 Gender Balance in Presenting to SMG and Commission

Action 1: Continue to collect data at SMG and Commission level until April 2019 and produce reports on findings.

Research carried out for the period 2018/19 found that 51 female and 27 male staff had presented to SMG and 11 female and 7 male staff had presented to the Assembly Commission⁵. Heads of Business will be encouraged to invite team members working on projects to accompany them to SMG meetings, reminders to be sent in September of each year.

³ [Gender Action Plan 2016-2018 Closure Report](#), pp.2-3.

⁴ [Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23](#).

⁵ [Barbara Love \(2019\), Gender balance of staff presenting at Secretariat Management Group and Assembly Commission meetings 2018/19. Assembly Research Briefing Note NIAR 131-18 31 October 2019](#), pp.2-3.

1.2.2 Gender Balancing on Groups

Action 2: Monitoring of checklist returns on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels. To be completed by HoBs and Directors utilising guidance issued by the Equality Unit.

Research carried out in 2014 found that 16 of 26 decision-making groups were dominated by male representation, 2 were dominated by female representation and 8 had equal representation. Additional analysis of 7 groups formed from 2017 onwards found that 5 were dominated by male representation and 2 had equal representation.⁶ Heads of Business were to be reminded to consult the gender balance checklist when forming new groups, reminders to be sent in September of each year.

1.2.3 Continued Focus on Equal Pay

Action 3: The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay review every two years and address issues arising.

Equal pay reviews are to be conducted every two years.

1.2.4 Senior Women's Network

Action 4: Implement Senior Women's Network (AG4 and above) to meet at least twice a year.

This has been replaced by the following:

- Option to join the NI Civil Service Women's Network
- Role of the Gender Action Implementation Group in identifying gender issues across the Secretariat

⁶ [Raymond Russell \(2020\). Gender balance in Assembly Secretariat decision-making groups. Assembly Research Briefing Note NIAR 265—020. 1 October 2020, pp.2-3.](#)

- Opportunity for staff to participate in external coaching and mentoring programmes
- Implementation of the Assembly Commission's People Manager Programme

While this action is recorded as 'complete' in the March 2022 Update, the action has been modified, rather than implemented.

1.2.5 Awards

Action 5: Consider third party recognition awards and apply for awards as appropriate.

The March 2022 Update indicates this action is implemented through Actions 6 and 8.

Action 6: Apply for Bronze Diversity NI⁷ Charter Mark.

The Bronze Award has been achieved, but it was decided not to progress to Silver.

1.2.6 Menopause Policy

Action 7: Develop a Menopause Policy to provide support and assistance to staff and managers.

The March 2022 Update states implementation has been delayed due to resource issues. The revised timeline is September 2022.

1.2.7 Transgender – Inclusion in the Workplace

Action 8: Participate in the Stonewall⁸ Diversity Champions Programme.

⁷ This refers to [Diversity Mark](#), which provides accreditation for commitment to diversity for businesses.

⁸ [Stonewall](#) supports LGBTQ+ people. The Diversity Champions Programme supports employers to be LGBTQ+ inclusive.

The purpose of joining the Programme was to receive support in the development of the Transgender Policy and Guidance. This development having been completed, membership was not renewed for 2022.

1.2.8 Development of a Transgender Policy

Action 9: Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings.

Following internal and external consultation, a final version of this policy is under review by SMG.

1.2.9 Raise Awareness Around Transgender Issues

Action 10: Provide training to staff on transgender issues once Policy developed.

This action is to be implemented when the Transgender Policy is approved and issued.

1.2.10 Research

Action 11: Participate in QUB PhD Project 'Gender equality in the UK and Germany: HR Management in light of conflicting constitutional logics'⁹.

Findings of the research are to be shared with Assembly senior staff.

1.2.11 Regular Monitoring of Progress against Agreed Actions

Action 12: Provide progress update to SMG every six months.

Progress is reported to SMG every six months.

⁹ This refers to the PhD project "[Gender equality in the United Kingdom and Germany: Human Resource Management in light of conflicting institutional logics](#)", undertaken by Stuart McClure at the School of Management, Business and Economics at Queen's University Belfast, supervised by Dr Heike Schroder.

Action 13: Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress.

The Gender Action Plan is included in annual reports to the Equality Commission on statutory equality and good relations duties¹⁰.

1.2.12 Central administration and co-ordination of work of Gender Action

Action 14: Co-ordinate and oversee the rollout of implementation of the Action Plan.

A Gender Action Implementation Group oversees implementation and issues updates in March and October of each year¹¹.

¹⁰ [Northern Ireland Assembly annual Equality and Good Relations reports to the Equality Commission.](#)

¹¹ [Assembly Commission Gender Action Plan web pages.](#)

2 Outstanding Gender Issues

This section considers available evidence relating to outstanding issues for gender equality in Northern Ireland Assembly. Evidence is derived from:

- Northern Ireland Assembly Staff Survey
- Audit of inequalities

2.1 Gender Issues in the Staff Survey

A gendered assessment was carried out on the results of the Assembly Staff Survey of 2017. Gender differences, as identified in the original analysis, are summarised as follows¹²:

- While females tended to have more positive views than males about working in the Assembly, males were more positive about their work/life balance than females;
- While more males than females reported they had been subjected to unacceptable behaviour, females were more likely to experience such behaviour from more senior colleagues, whereas males more often reported such behaviour from colleagues of the same or lower grade;
- Males tended to feel more positively than females about their line manager in terms of opportunities to provide feedback, recognition of work and having meaningful discussions about their performance and development, but females were more satisfied with how their performance was reviewed;
- While females responded more positively than males regarding opportunities for learning and development, males were more satisfied with opportunities for career development; and

¹² [Barbara Love \(2018\), NIA Staff Survey 2017 Gender Report, Assembly Research Paper NIAR 119-017, 23 September 2018, p.46.](#)

- In general, females were more positive than males in respect of internal communications.

The results of the 2022 Staff Survey¹³ indicate that female respondents are more satisfied than males in most areas of their work environment referred to in the survey. This is the case in the following areas:

- Work/life balance and family-friendly policies
- Contribution to the Assembly Commission
- Working environment
- Assembly Commission approach to Covid-19
- Changes to working practices
- Remote working
- Recognition and respect
- Working relationships
- Attitude of, feedback from and acknowledgement from line manager
- The work of the Secretariat Management Group (SMG)
- The work of the Assembly Commission
- Performance management processes
- Internal communications
- Equality of opportunity
- Good relations and inclusiveness

However, female respondents were less likely than male respondents to agree that the Assembly Commission actively promotes mental health; rate their wellbeing lower, rate their morale lower, see fewer opportunities for career development and are less likely to view the Assembly as inclusive for disabled people.

¹³ Aaron McMurray (2022), *Northern Ireland Assembly Commission: Secretariat Staff Survey 2022*, Assembly Research Paper, 17 June 2022.

2.2 Gender Issues in the Audit of Inequalities

An audit of inequalities for the Northern Ireland Assembly was conducted in 2016¹⁴. This was reviewed in 2019 and updates on progress have been published in 2020 and 2021. At the time of writing, there was an ongoing consultation on the 2022 audit. This section examines the gender issues raised in the audit.

2.2.1 Issues Raised in 2016

The 2016¹⁵ audit examined progress since the 2011 audit, which assessed compliance with statutory equality and good relations duties relating to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998¹⁶. Commentary on gender in the audit included the following:

- Attendance at Assembly events ('Insight into', 'Get Involved' and 'How the Assembly Works'), where there was a majority of females to males attending across the three examples;
- Staff complement, where there was a higher male representation at the highest (1-3) and lowest (7-8) grades, but higher female representation at the middle (4-6) grades;
- Work relating to the Gender Action Plan (see Section 1 above); and
- Political representation, which is not within the scope of this paper (but see Section 3 below, regarding the AERC Review).

2.2.2 Developments Since 2016

¹⁴ [Northern Ireland Assembly Audit of In Equalities web page.](#)

¹⁵ [Barbara Love and Niall Robb \(2016\), Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Audit of Inequalities 2016, Assembly Research Briefing Paper, 27 January 2016.](#)

¹⁶ [Northern Ireland Act 1998.](#)

A review in 2019 noted the Secretariat was majority male (55.6%) and the same patterns of gender representation existed as in the 2016 audit, i.e. majority male at the higher and lower grades and majority female in the middle grades¹⁷.

The following actions from the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan relate to equality between women and men (or all groups):

Action 10: Monitoring of revised Engagement Strategy

The timetable for this was July 2016 and will have informed the 2019 audit review.

Action 11: Engaging with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities under-represented in public life through Assembly Community Connect.

The November 2021 update to the Action Plan indicates this work is ongoing¹⁸.

Action 15: Implementation of Secretariat Gender Action Plan.

See Section 1 above.

Action 22: Speaker to host 'Assembly Women's Week' in 2016 which will focus on encouraging women to participate and increasing female representation.

The Speaker has hosted an event for International Women's Day since 2016.

Action 23: Develop a business outreach plan by delivering targeted training to businesses to raise awareness of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) in the private sector.

This is indicated as 'in progress' in the November 2021 update.

¹⁷ [Assembly Research Briefing Paper Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Audit of Inequalities:2019 Review, 5 September 2019](#), p.26.

¹⁸ [November 2021 Update - Audit of Inequalities Action Plan](#).

Action 25: Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.

The November 2021 update indicates this has been implemented and is ongoing.

Action 25: Continue to implement fair and inclusive recruitment practices.

The November 2021 update indicates this has been implemented and is ongoing.

Action 26: Continue to implement staff surveys.

See Section 2.1 above.

2.2.3 The 2022 Audit

The draft Audit of Inequalities 2022-26 was published for consultation in August 2022¹⁹. The only issue raised in relation to gender equality is in terms of staff composition: the Secretariat is majority male (53%) and there are more males than females in the support grades (AG7-8).

The document shows that the senior management grades (1-4) and middle management grades (5-6) are majority female, where the 2016 audit showed the senior management was majority male. However, the 2016 audit considered grades AG1-3 to be 'senior management', whereas the 2022 audit extends this to AG4, which was regarded as 'middle management' in 2016. The movement of the majority female AG4 grade into senior management therefore impacts upon the perception of an increase in women in the most senior posts of the Assembly.

¹⁹ [Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Draft Audit of Inequalities 2022-26](#), August 2022.

Actions 5 and 6 of the draft Action Plan aim at increasing the number of females in the Assembly, particularly in relation to Assembly Grades 7 and 8.

3 The AERC Review of Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly

This section summarises the AERC Review of Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly and traces the implementation of the recommendations of the Review.

3.1 The Review

On 24 June 2014, the AERC agreed terms of reference for a Review of Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly. These were to²⁰:

- Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly;
- Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly;
- Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly; and
- Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly.

The Committee concluded that:

- I. The under-representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland is a serious issue which must be addressed as matter of urgency.
- II. The Assembly and political parties play a key role in encouraging women to seek and secure election to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

²⁰ AERC (2015), [Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly](#), p.1.

- III. Civil society and the education sector have an important contribution to make in encouraging women to consider a career in politics.
- IV. The Executive's strategies and policies if designed, delivered and appropriately funded can enable women at all levels of society to balance their caring responsibilities with a career in politics.
- V. The media plays an important role in informing society's views about the work of female politicians and the contribution they make to political life in Northern Ireland.

The Committee made 29 recommendations: 10 for action by the political parties, 14 for the Assembly and 5 for the Northern Ireland Executive. These recommendations are listed at Appendix 4.

3.1 Implementation of the AERC Recommendations

In August 2018, the Northern Ireland Assembly Women's Caucus wrote to the Speaker for an update on progress in the implementation of the Committee's recommendations. A summary of the Speaker's responses, along with examples of actions from other legislatures, is at Appendix 5²¹.

The recommendations of the Review in relation to the Assembly (11 to 24) are considered in turn.

11. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to engage with young women and school girls to discover why they are not engaging in political life and what positive initiatives could be brought forward as a result.

The Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2018-23 includes²²:

²¹ Extracted from Research and Information Service Briefing Paper NIAR 137-019, *Progress on Recommendations by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee to promote the Participation of Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly*, 4 September 2019, prepared for the Women's Caucus (Recommendations 11 to 22).

²² [Northern Ireland Assembly Corporate Strategy 2018-23](#), p4.

Building connections with target groups including for example, support for greater female participation and the delivery of a Youth Assembly.

The paper *Programmes to Encourage Young Women and Girls into Politics*, prepared for the Women's Caucus in 2020, is appended to this paper as Annex A²³.

12. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider adopting measures from local, national and international best practice to create a gender sensitive Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Assembly Women's Caucus introduced a manifesto and action plan for a gender-sensitive parliament²⁴. This comprises 4 elements:

1. Processes that Facilitate the Participation of both Women and Men
2. Actions that Promote Equality and Participation
3. An Environment that is Accessible to both Women and Men
4. Gender-sensitive Political Parties and Politicians

The detail of these elements is at Appendix 6.

The paper *Gender Sensitive Parliaments*, prepared for the Assembly Women's Caucus in 2019, is appended to this paper at Annex B²⁵.

13. The Committee recommended that all initiatives designed to increase and support women in the Northern Ireland Assembly should be given strong support from the Assembly leadership.

²³ Research and Information Service Briefing Paper *Programmes to Encourage Young Women and Girls into Politics*, NIAR 358-020, 18 December 2020.

²⁴ [Assembly Women's Caucus Manifesto and Action Plan](#).

²⁵ Research and Information Service Briefing Paper *Gender Sensitive Parliaments* 079-019, 28 May 2019.

The Assembly Speaker and Commission have supported individual initiatives, such as annually marking International Women's Day, 'Women's Week' in the Assembly in 2016²⁶ and an exhibition in the Great Hall on women's suffrage²⁷.

14. Furthermore the Committee recommended that, where possible, the Assembly should consider how it can support political parties in implementing the recommendations from this Review.

Assembly Outreach and Education services invite political parties to initiatives relating to women's participation.

15. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should establish a working group on a gender sensitive parliament. The working group should have equal membership of male and female MLAs.

The Assembly Women's Caucus has taken this recommendation forward (see Recommendation 12).

16. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should conduct a gender survey across all Members to identify the key barriers and challenges and, based on the feedback received, develop a gender action plan with specific measures to help Members balance family life with their political career.

Initial development work was undertaken by the Assembly Women's Caucus in 2019.

17. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should undertake a review of voting mechanisms used in other legislatures as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings.

²⁶ ['Assembly Women's Week Monday 7 March to Friday 11 March'](#), Education Service web pages 1 March 2016.

²⁷ ['Speaker Launches Exhibition to Mark Anniversary of Women's Suffrage Movement'](#), Assembly press release 30 April 2013.

The Committee for Procedures conducted a review of the business of the Assembly business week, including considerations for family friendly sittings. The Committee concluded there should be no changes to the business week of the Assembly²⁸.

Temporary standing orders (SO 110-116) were introduced from 31 March 2020 to the end of July 2022 to address issues associated with the Covid-19 pandemic²⁹. These included options for remote attendance at plenary and committee meetings and arrangements for proxy voting. These measures would have family friendly benefits.

18. The Committee recommended that following the next Assembly elections, the Assembly should carry out an anonymous survey of all candidates to identify the barriers and challenges they encountered.

This is considered to be outside the Assembly Commission's remit.

19. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to develop and deliver training and capacity building programmes to assist female MLAs in carrying out their role as elected public representatives.

Individual programmes have been delivered by Politics Plus, a funded project embedded in the Assembly established in 2013. The Politics Plus project is now closed.

20. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider targeted engagement with the media, civil society and schools to profile the work of female MLAs.

There are no specific programmes to profile female MLAs.

²⁸ [Committee for Procedures \(2014\). *Review of the current organisation of the business week of the Northern Ireland Assembly*, 29 April 2014.](#)

²⁹ [Standing Orders as amended 14 March 2022.](#)

21. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider hosting at least one annual event to highlight the work of female politicians. This could coincide with either International Women's Day or during Parliamentary Week.

See Recommendation 13.

22. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should ensure, where possible, gender representation be considered when agreeing official delegations from the Assembly.

This is considered to be outside the Assembly Commission's remit.

23. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should facilitate the creation of a women's parliamentary caucus.

The Assembly Women's Caucus was established in 2016 with the following objectives³⁰:

- Champion and support the recommendations for action listed in the Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly 2015 report in partnership with the political parties, the Assembly and the Executive.
- Champion the practical implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in partnership with the All Party Group on Women Peace and Security;
- Work in partnership with the Northern Ireland Women's Sector to support individual women wanting to become further involved in politics;
- Work in partnership with the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly, the Northern Ireland Women's and Education Sectors, and with the media, to

³⁰ [Assembly Women's Caucus web pages](#).

promote the idea of gender-equality in political representation as essential and achievable with the correct targeted action.

- Facilitate gender-specific training, coaching and study exchanges for women MLAs

24. The Committee recommended that the Assembly through Assembly Research and Information Services should assist Committees undertake gender based analysis of public policies and budgets.

In addition to research relating to legislation that impacts primarily on women, or proactive gender-related research³¹, Assembly research papers including gender analysis have been prepared for committees where requested, for example, the gender aspects of school uniforms for the Committee for Education³², gender budgeting for the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights³³ and female participation in sport for the Committee for Communities³⁴.

Assembly committees have not to date requested gender analysis of budgets.

The Assembly and Executive Review Committee considered gender imbalances in the Assembly and the Executive, conducting a 'stocktake' of progress on the recommendations of the 2015 Review³⁵. Following this initial

³¹ For example, [Who Runs Northern Ireland? A Summary of Statistics Relating to Gender and Power in 2020, Briefing Paper 001/20, 13 January 2020.](#)

³² [Sinéad McMurray \(2021\), School Uniforms: Cost, Gender and behavioural considerations, Briefing Paper 49/21, 27 May 2021.](#)

³³ [Eileen Regan \(2021\), Gender budgeting in government: a comparative perspective on legal bases, Briefing Paper 31/21, 23 April 2021.](#)

³⁴ [Karen McCallion \(2021\), Female participation in sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland, Research Paper 26/21, 29 January 2021.](#)

³⁵ See [Ray McCaffrey and Sinéad McMurray \(2022\), Gender, diversity and good relations in a parliamentary context, Briefing Paper 005/22, January 2022.](#)

scoping work, the Committee recommended the successor committee takes up this theme in the next mandate³⁶.

3.2 Implications of the AERC Recommendations for Assembly Commission Staff

The recommendations of the Committee were aimed at increasing the participation of women in political life. However, there are direct and indirect implications for Secretariat staff that can be drawn from the deliberations of the Committee during the Review and the recommendations themselves. These are considered in turn.

3.2.1 Women's caucus (Recommendation 23)

Action 4 of the Continuing Gender Action Plan, which refers to the creation of a Senior Women's Network for AG4 and above, has been superseded by arranging for Commission staff to have an option for joining the NICS Women's Network, the work of the Gender Action Implementation Group and provision for coaching and mentoring programmes. The Women's Caucus is composed of women specific to the Assembly context who can bring actions relating to women to decision-making processes.

An equivalent to the Caucus in the Assembly Secretariat would be a reference group of women drawn from all grades whose role would be to discuss gender-specific issues within the Assembly Commission and bring proposed actions to a decision-making body (such as SMG). Such a group would differ from Action 4 and the arrangements that have superseded it.

³⁶ [Assembly and Executive Review Committee \(2022\), Legacy Report 2017-2022.](#)

3.2.2 Gender Sensitive Parliament (Recommendations 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21)

The actions for ensuring a gender sensitive parliament may apply equally to staff as well as Members. For example, taking the elements of the Women's Caucus Manifesto and Action Plan:

Element 1: Processes that facilitate the participation of both women and men:

- A mechanism to bring gender issues to decision-making processes. An example might be a gender reference group bringing issues to SMG (see 3.2.1 above).
- A review of voting mechanisms as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings. Family friendly sittings would equally benefit the staff who administer them.
- Gender-specific media representation of female MLAs. The promotion of female role models in politics may have a positive impact on the leadership aspirations of female staff.

Element 2: Actions that promote equality and participation:

- Gender equality awareness training. This can apply equally to staff.
- Training, mentoring and coaching support specific to the needs of women MLAs. This can apply equally to staff.
- Profiling the work of female MLAs. Senior staff may also be profiled as role models.

Element 3: An environment that is accessible to both women and men:

- Portraiture of female MLAs. More images of women in Parliament Buildings would contribute to making the workplace less 'masculine'.
- Participation of female MLAs at events relating to gender equality. The promotion of gender equality events would also benefit staff.
- Audit of language and behaviours in the Chamber. Standards in the Chamber have an impact on the environment in the rest of the building.
- Provision of family rooms. Family rooms could also be provided for staff.

Element 4: Gender sensitive political parties and politicians:

- Mentoring programmes. These can equally apply to staff.
- Diversity awareness training for party members involved in candidate selection. This can equally apply to staff recruitment.
- Positive women role models in political appointments. This can apply equally to staff.
- Gender proofing media strategies. This can equally apply to the Assembly Commission.

3.2.3 Gender survey (Recommendation 16)

The staff survey provides some insights into potential gender differences in the perceptions and experiences of staff. Action on these differences would require greater understanding of the issues for women and men. A gender-specific survey would throw light on such issues.

3.2.4 Representation on official delegations (Recommendation 22)

As a matter of policy, the Assembly could ensure that, where possible, a gender balance is maintained for delegations from the Secretariat.

3.2.5 Gender analysis of policies and budgets (Recommendation 24)

Gender analysis of policies and budgets could equally apply to the policies and budgets of the Assembly Commission as to those of the Executive.

4 Gender Action Plans in Other Jurisdictions

This section looks at actions that support women in other legislatures to enable a comparative analysis with the Gender Action Plan in the Assembly. The legislatures considered are:

- The House of Commons
- The Oireachtas
- The Scottish Parliament
- The Welsh Senedd
- The House of Lords

4.1 House of Commons

The House of Commons published a gender-sensitive parliament audit in 2018³⁷. The 52 conclusions and recommendations are reproduced at Appendix 7. Two key findings of the audit that impact upon Members and staff, rather than Members only, are issues of bullying and harassment and challenges of combining family life with the work of the parliament.

The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy 2019-22 is aligned to the overall objectives of the parliament. Objective 4: Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Working Environment, which includes 21 actions. While most of these actions are broadly focussed on all aspects of diversity and inclusion, gender-specific actions include building awareness on gender identity, work to address the gender pay gap, monitor bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

The 2020 Diversity Monitoring Report made one recommendation for action relating to gender. The staff survey indicated that more female staff worked part

³⁷ [UK Parliament \(2018\). Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit 2018.](#)

time due to caring responsibilities than male staff. The recommendation was for monitoring of patterns of work by gender³⁸.

Workplace Equality Networks have been established to enable groups of people to discuss and consider issues relevant to their situations or interests.

ParliGENDER is the group for gender equality³⁹, which includes all pass holders in the Commons, Lords, Parliamentary Digital Service, contractors employed by Parliament, MPs, Lords and their staff.

There is an onsite childcare facility, for day and evening provision, available to staff and Members from both Houses⁴⁰. There are costs to use the facility.

4.2 Oireachtas

No gender action plan or equality policies were identified in the context of this research.

4.3 Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-21 is a high level document that is outcomes-focussed, none of which are specific to gender, and there are no stated actions⁴¹.

The Diversity and Monitoring Report for 2020 provides details of staff composition by gender, including maternity data and working patterns by

³⁸ [Claire Harvey \(2020\). *House of Commons and Parliamentary Digital Service Diversity Monitoring Report 2020*. London: House of Commons](#), p.9.

³⁹ [ParliGENDER web page](#), House of Commons website.

⁴⁰ ['Working at Parliament: Nursery Facilities'](#), UK Parliament website.

⁴¹ [Scottish Parliament \(2017\). *Diversity and Inclusion - Innovation through Diversity: Scottish Parliament's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021*](#).

gender. Gender pay gap data are also provided⁴². The report contains three actions for 2021/22, none of which related to gender equality.

The Parliament has Diversity Networks to provide support to people from diverse groups to connect, build contacts, share experiences, arrange events and to socialise⁴³. This includes a women's network.

The Scottish Parliament had an onsite crèche facility, free to all building users. This closed during the Covid-19 pandemic and had not reopened at the time of writing⁴⁴.

4.4 Welsh Senedd

The Senedd Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2016-2021 is broad-based and high level, containing no specific actions and having no commitments specific to gender⁴⁵. The legislature also publishes:

- Diversity and Inclusion Annual Reports⁴⁶;
- Workforce and recruitment data⁴⁷; and
- Equal pay data⁴⁸.

⁴² [Scottish Parliament \(2020\), *Diversity Monitoring and Pay Gaps Report*](#).

⁴³ [Diversity Networks web page](#), Scottish Parliament website.

⁴⁴ There have been some concerns raised in relation to the suitability of the space available: [S6W-04445](#), answered 25 November 2021.

⁴⁵ [National Assembly for Wales \(2017\), *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2016-2021*](#).

⁴⁶ [Senedd Commission \(2022\), *Diversity and Inclusion: Annual Report 2021-22*](#).

⁴⁷ [Senedd Commission \(2022\), *Diversity and Inclusion: Workforce and Recruitment Monitoring Report June 2022*](#).

⁴⁸ [Senedd Commission \(2022\), *Diversity and Inclusion: Equal Pay Audit, Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap Reporting, June 2022*](#).

The 2021-22 Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report includes work streams to address imbalances indicated by the various monitoring processes. One of these specifically refers to gender: taking steps to address the pay gap⁴⁹.

4.5 House of Lords

The House of Lords published an update on actions from its 'Focus on Inclusion' strategy in 2021⁵⁰. This report provides updates on the progress of 45 actions. Actions specific to gender were as follows:

- Drive changes identified by the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit (see Section 4.1 above)
- Gender and ethnicity pay gaps measured and actions undertaken to narrow the gaps
- Collaborate with ParliGender to improve breast feeding facilities

The Action on Inclusion strategy 2021-24 provides staffing statistics by gender and gender pay gap information⁵¹. The strategy is outcomes rather than process driven and does not contain specific actions in relation to gender.

Personnel at the House of Lords also have access to the cross-parliament Workplace Equality Networks (see Section 4.1).

⁴⁹ Senedd Commission (2022), *Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2021-22*, p.47.

⁵⁰ [House of Lords \(2021\), *Focus on Inclusion: Two Years On*.](#)

⁵¹ [House of Lords \(2021\), *Action on Inclusion 2021-24*.](#)

5 Conclusions and Options for Consideration

This section looks at the following:

- Outstanding actions from the Gender Action Plan
- Outstanding issues relating to gender that have not been addressed
- Measures that other legislatures are undertaking to promote gender equality.

A range of options for further development is then outlined.

5.1 Outstanding Actions from the Gender Action Plan

The following are indicated as outstanding actions for the Gender Action Plan, as per the March 2022 Update:

- Action 7: Develop a menopause policy to provide support and assistance to staff and managers
- Action 9: Develop a transgender policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings
- Action 10: Provide training to staff on transgender issues once the transgender policy is developed

The establishment of a Senior Women's Network (Action 4) was changed to a number of other actions, such as access to the NI Civil Service Women's Network, opportunities to avail of external mentoring and implementation of the Assembly's People Manager Programme.

Two actions for benchmarking were completed in terms of the action plan, but decisions were made not to proceed with further accreditation or membership: The Diversity Mark award (Action 6) and membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme (Action 8).

Other actions have entailed monitoring. The collection of data on the gender balance of people presenting to SMG or the Commission has been superseded by an annual email to heads of business to consider the issue when sending presenters (Action 1). Six monthly reports are also to be provided to SMG (Action 12) and annual reports to the Equality Commission (Action 13).

5.2 Outstanding Issues

The Staff Survey indicates that some issues are gendered. In particular, female staff are more likely than men to report less satisfaction in relation to wellbeing, work-life balance and career development. The reasons for this difference are not explored, remaining an area for potential investigation.

The Audit of Inequalities has in the past indicated the gender imbalance at senior levels. The elevation of AG4 to senior management in the most recent Audit has skewed the understanding of this issue, requiring further investigation to identify the extent to which any progress has been made in this area.

The AERC report contained recommendations that could benefit staff in the Assembly. The establishment of a group akin to a women's caucus could provide a venue for gender issues to be identified, raised, discussed and solutions proposed. A full gender-sensitive parliament audit would provide the basis for understanding the impact of the nature of the working environment. While the Staff Survey has been mined for gender differentials, a fuller understanding of the gendered nature of issues in the Assembly might be provided by a bespoke gender survey. There may also be options for the gender composition of external delegations to be considered in policy.

5.3 Measures in Other Legislatures

The approach in the other legislatures examined have been to develop broad diversity and inclusion strategies, rather than have a stand-alone gender action plan. These tend to be high level and non-specific strategies, without measurable actions. In these cases, gender is subsumed into wider diversity measures, including adjustments for disability and ethnicity.

Measures in place in other legislatures that are not available at the Assembly include the following:

5.3.1 Onsite Childcare

Staff in the Houses of Parliament have the option to pay for childcare at an onsite facility. The Scottish Parliament formerly had a free childcare facility for all building users, currently closed.

5.3.2 Women's Network

The Houses of Parliament and the Scottish Parliament have diversity networks, including women's networks. These provide support, interaction and a venue to raise gender-specific issues.

5.3 Options

With the exception of actions such as the development of menopause and transgender policies, the majority of actions in the Gender Action Plan have been completed. The key three questions are:

1. How effective have the actions been (i.e. what outcomes have been achieved)?
2. Are there additional actions that need to be undertaken, e.g. in the light of new information on inequalities, or are there measures from elsewhere that might be adopted?
3. How is progress to be sustained and monitored in the absence of the Gender Action Implementation Group?

These questions are considered in turn.

5.3.1 Outcomes

The group may wish to review the aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the Action Plan, survey the key indicators of change and assess progress. For example, the gender imbalance at senior management level may require more nuanced analysis due to the change in designation of AG4 to senior management, impacting upon measurement of progress.

5.3.2 Potential Additional Actions

The following is a list of actions that might be considered as a result of the analysis in this paper:

- Policy direction for and monitoring of the gender balance on internal groups and external delegations, which may be an intention or a requirement (as with delegations to the Council of Europe, for example).
- The establishment of a women's network in the Assembly, of all grades, that could, *inter alia*, provide mutual support, act as a venue for raising issues and/or formulate proposals for change.
- Consideration of further pursuit of awards, benchmarks or champion status for gender-related policies and actions.
- Conduct of a gender-specific staff survey, with a significant qualitative element, to better identify issues that have a gender differential.
- Consideration of the provision of on-site childcare and/or other parenting or caring facilities.

It is not within the scope of this paper to consider proposals outside of the remit of the Secretariat, but a full gender-sensitive parliament audit has not been carried out for the Assembly. Such an exercise would significantly inform any potential future actions.

5.3.3 Monitoring

Consideration might be given to how the achievements of the Gender Action Plan might be monitored, should a successor plan not be developed and the related implementation group be dissolved. There is also additional information that might be made available, for example, the equal pay audits for the Houses of Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Senedd are published, whereas those of the Assembly, at the time of writing, were not.

Appendix 1: Assembly Commission Gender Action Plan 2016-2018

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Mentoring and Coaching	Seek access to NICS Mentoring Programme aimed at all NIA grades.	Assembly Commission staff are afforded opportunity to participate in the NICS Mentoring Programme. Target uptake five staff.	Human Resources Office	Launch October 2015 – programme duration 9 months.
	Seek access to CO3 (Chief Executive Office Third Generation) mentoring project.	Assembly Commission staff are afforded opportunity to participate in the CO3 Mentoring Programme. Target uptake of five staff.	Human Resources Office	Launch May 2015 – programme duration 12 months.
	Join Business in the Community's Gender Project, which supports organisations to increase gender diversity, shift workplace behaviours and create enabling workplaces for men and women.	Full participation in the Gender Project over its three-year duration, leading to the development of a bespoke action plan as part of a collaborative approach to address unconscious bias and create a truly inclusive workplace.	Human Resources Office and Equality and Good Relations Unit	Project commences October 2015, for 3 years. (year one project plan attached at annexe d)
	Commission staff participation in Women in Public Life Programme.	Assembly Commission staff are afforded the opportunity to participate in programme (five places available).	Politics Plus	October 15-June 2016
Gender balance in presenting to SMG and Commission	Collect data at SMG and Commission level and produce yearly report on findings.	One year of complete data available at reporting year end detailing gender balancing.	Commission and Clerk/Chief Executive's Office (CCEO)	31 March 2017
SMG and Commission Deputising Guides	Develop briefing guides/procedures for deputising at SMG and Commission to	Revised submission guide along with revised templates to be published on AsslSt.	CCEO	1 April 2016

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
	ensure that deputies have a full understanding of how SMG works.			
Tabling of Papers at SMG and Commission	Introduce process to enable authors of SMG/Commission papers to present them at meetings.	Revised SMG guidance and communication to include note to Directors on increasing number and range of staff attending and presenting to SMG/Commission	CCEO	1 April 2016
	Make provision for HoBs to attend SMG at least once a year.	Revised SMG guidance and communication to include note to Directors on increasing number and range of staff attending and presenting to SMG/Commission	CCEO	1 April 2016
Gender Balancing on Groups	Develop guidance for HoBs and Directors on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels.	Guidance presented to SMG following liaison with directors and feedback from Gender Action Implementation Group.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	December 2016
Training	Explore opportunities to partner with organisations where the potential uptake of courses is low.	HR Office will continue to liaise with partner organisations as appropriate.	Human Resources Office	Ongoing
	Continue practice of offering, as far as possible, a range of dates/times for learning events and ensure that this is reflected in learning and development written procedures.	Learning and development written procedures reviewed to reflect practice, which will be applied consistently.	Human Resources Office	Review of procedures by November 2015 – monitor over lifetime of action plan
	Ensure as far as possible that training events are arranged in Northern Ireland	Learning and development written procedures reviewed to reflect practice, which will be applied consistently. 95% of training events will be offered within Northern Ireland.	Human Resources Office	Review of procedures by November 2015. Annual measurement at 31 March each year.

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
	Explore option, where possible, of sharing training materials with all secretariat staff so that staff who are unable to attend training courses can access materials.	Procurement process for learning activities will be developed to include clause consenting to sharing of training materials internally via Moodle (Virtual Learning Environment)	Human Resources Office	March 2016
	Dignity at Work Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy will continue to be kept under review to ensure compliance with legislation and that the interests of all categories, including gender, are addressed.	Policies will be kept under review on an ongoing basis in light of developments in legislation. Policies will be subject to full review by 31 March 2018, if not required before that date.	Human Resources Office	Ongoing and full review by 31 March 2018
Continued focus on equal pay	The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay review every two years and address issues arising.	Equal pay reviews will be conducted every two years and gender-related statistically significant differences in pay (as determined by NISRA) will be considered by SMG.	Human Resources Office	By December 2015 and 2017
Implementation of relevant AERC Review Recommendations	Bring AERC recommendations to Women in Politics Working Group and advise Gender Action Implementation Group of any potential impact on Secretariat.	Relevant impact from AERC recommendations is planned for and managed within Assembly Secretariat.	Clerking/Gender Action Implementation Group	March 2016

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Gender Leadership Network	Consider models for a Gender Leadership Network, including model of Assembly Leadership Forum (ALF).	Research paper; identify models of good practice to promote the position of women in the workplace	RaISe	March 2017
Awards	Explore the area of awards as discussed in the Working Paper from the European Commission's Network to Promote Women in Decision-Making in Politics and the Economy (copy circulated).	Research paper; identify models of good practice to promote the position of women in the workplace	RaISe	March 2017
Utilise Existing Assembly Networks	Explore potential for coaching and mentoring opportunities through Assembly Community Connect and the Business Trust, including potential for gender fellowships, where women from NIA shadow the work of women within the Business Trust/CO3. Members of the Business Trust and ACC could also contribute to a Gender Leadership Network, if created.	Female employees are provided with fellowship/shadowing opportunities through Assembly Community Connect and the Business Trust.	Outreach with assistance from Human Resources Office	2017-18

Theme 3 – Life Balance/Health and Well-being				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Job Share Register	Implement Job Share register	Job Share register and associated guidance issued to staff enabling them to register interest in job sharing arrangements.	Human Resources Office	March 2016
Caring Responsibilities Guidance	Develop caring responsibilities guidance for managers and staff (subject to formal consultation) and include in staff handbook. Guidance should promote holding of meetings between 10am-4pm as far as possible	Caring Responsibilities Guidance is developed and issued to staff.	Human Resources Office	October 2017
Job sampling	Address job sampling through implementation of Job Shadowing Policy	Job Shadowing Policy is developed and issued to staff.	Human Resources Office	Introduced in October 2015 and will be kept under review throughout lifetime of plan
Childcare Scheme	Consider issues arising from review of childcare scheme	Issues identified and information provided to SMG and Commission as appropriate.	Human Resources Office	June 2016
Gather staff views on life balance	Continue to conduct staff surveys and review questions to ensure that gender aspects are included	Continued measurement of staff opinion and survey outcomes published on AssISt	Secretariat Management Group (SMG)/Internal Communications Group (ICG)	March 2017
Domestic violence policy	Development of policy for Secretariat staff	Domestic Violence Policy is developed and issued to staff	Human Resources Office	March 2018

Theme 3 – Life Balance/Health and Well-being				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Development of a Transgender Policy	Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff	Human Resources Office	March 2017
Raise awareness around transgender issues	Provide training to staff on transgender issues once policy developed.	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission Policy.	Human Resources Office	September 2017

Reporting and Monitoring				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	Provide progress update to SMG and the Assembly Commission every six months	Every six months, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMG/Commission, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Every six months from Commission approval of final plan
	Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress	As part of annual report to the Equality Commission, provide full update of directorate activity against action plan targets.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	31 August every year
Central administration and co-ordination of work of Gender Action Implementation Group	Co-ordinate and oversee the roll-out of implementation of the action plan	Co-ordination of meetings and work of the Implementation Group once established; Support provided to business areas where necessary; Progress of business areas tracked against targets; and written updates to SMG/Commission on progress against specific actions every six months.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Ongoing until 2018

Appendix 2: Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Gender balance in presenting to SMG and Commission	1) Continue to collect data at SMG and Commission level until April 2019 and produce reports on findings. (Figures for Assembly Community Connect to be included on resumption of full business.)	One further year of complete data collected and analysed for 2018-19. The 2016-17 and 2017-18 reports are available on AsslSt . Final overview analysis report of all three years of data.	Commission and Clerk/Chief Executive's Office (CCEO)/RaISe	RaISe report for 18-19 to be prepared by July 2019 Final overview analysis report to be prepared by end of Oct 2019.
Gender Balancing on Groups	2) Monitoring of checklist returns on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels. To be completed by HoBs and Directors utilising guidance issued by the Equality Unit	Monitoring data to be collected for two further years: 2018-19 and 2019-20. (Two returns were received for the first reporting period, January 2017 to March 2018). RaISe to analyse three years of data, including any findings in the final analysis report on gender balance in presenting to SMG and Commission.	Equality and Good Relations Unit/RaISe and relevant Directors/HoBs	Final overview analysis of data to be prepared by end of Oct 2020.
Continued focus on equal pay	3) The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay	Equal pay reviews will be conducted every two years and gender-related statistically significant differences in pay	Human Resources Office	By end 2019

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
	review every two years and address issues arising	(as determined by NISRA) will be considered by SMG		

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Senior Women's Network	4) Implement Senior Women's Network (AG4 and above) to meet at least twice a year.	To have in place a network that enables issues to be identified, discussed and – if appropriate – solutions proposed or raised at the appropriate platform; and where good practice can be shared and highlighted.	Gender Action Plan Implementation Group	Every six months
Awards	5) Consider third party recognition awards and apply for awards as appropriate.	Application process completed and submission made.	Gender Action Plan Implementation Group	Issue of awards to be considered on resumption of full Assembly business.
	6) Apply for Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark	Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark achieved. Actions identified to progress to Silver Diversity NI Charter Mark within two years		September 2019 By end of 2021
Transgender – Inclusion in the Workplace	7) Participate in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.	Through participation in this programme, the Assembly Commission would have access to a programme which offers organisations tailored one-to-one support to help build workplaces that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.	Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR	Ongoing for lifetime of the plan

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Development of a Transgender Policy	8) Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff	Human Resources Office	March 2020
Raise awareness around transgender issues	9) Provide training to staff on transgender issues once policy developed.	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission Policy	Human Resources Office	March 2020

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Research	10) Participate in QUB PhD Project 'Gender equality in the UK and Germany: HR Management in light of conflicting constitutional logics'	Through participation in the project, the Assembly Commission will have feedback via anonymised employees' insights on gender equality in the organisation and relevant HR policies, which could be used to inform any further actions that may be required.	Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR	TBC

Reporting and Monitoring				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	11) Provide progress update to SMG every six months	Every six months, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMG/, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Every six months, generally March and October of every year
	12) Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress	As part of annual report to the Equality Commission, provide full update of directorate activity against action plan targets.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	31 August each year
Central administration and co-ordination of work of Gender Action Implementation Group	13) Co-ordinate and oversee the roll-out of implementation of the action plan	Co-ordination of meetings and work of the Implementation Group; Support provided to business areas where necessary; Progress of business areas tracked against targets; and written updates to SMG on progress against specific actions every six months.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Ongoing for lifetime of plan

Appendix 3: Gender Action Plan 2019-23 – March 2022 Update

Status Key		No of actions
	Complete <u>or</u> Complete for this six-month reporting	9
	In progress/ongoing <u>or</u> On schedule to be progressed in line with timeline	2
	Overdue	3
Total number of actions		14

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress update
Gender balance in presenting to SMG and Assembly Commission	1) Continue to collect data at SMG and Assembly Commission level until April 2019 and produce reports on findings. (Figures for Assembly Community Connect to be included on resumption of full business.)	<p>One further year of complete data collected and analysed for 2018-19. The 2016-17 and 2017-18 reports are available on AsslSt).</p> <p>Final overview analysis report of all three years of data.</p>	<p>Lead: Commission and Clerk/Chief Executive’s Office/RaISe</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> <p>Action complete, RaISe reports presented to SMG in March 2020 update.</p> <p>At its October 2020 meeting, SMG agreed that, as an ongoing practice resulting from this action, the Equality and Good Relations Unit should periodically email Heads of Business to encourage them to consider inviting team members involved in working on specific projects/papers to appear</p>

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress update
			<p>with them when presenting at SMG meetings.</p> <p>A reminder email to that effect was issued to Heads of Business on 13 September 2021 and further reminder emails will be scheduled for September of each year.</p>
Gender Balancing on Groups	<p>2) Monitoring of checklist returns on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels.</p> <p>To be completed by HoBs and Directors utilising guidance issued by the Equality Unit</p>	<p>Monitoring data to be collected for two further years: 2018-19 and 2019-20. (Two returns were received for the first reporting period, January 2017 to March 2018).</p> <p>RaISe to analyse three years of data, including any findings in the final analysis report on gender balance in presenting to SMG and Commission.</p>	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit/RaISe and relevant Directors/HoBs</p> <p>Status: Complete.</p> <p>RaISe analysis available on AssISt.</p> <p>At its October 2020 meeting, SMG agreed that, as an ongoing practice resulting from this action, the Equality and Good Relations Unit should periodically email Heads of Business to remind them to consult the gender balance checklist when forming new internal groups or panels.</p> <p>A reminder email to that effect was issued to Heads of Business on 13 September 2021 and further reminder emails will be</p>

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress update
			scheduled for September of each year.
Continued focus on equal pay	3) The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay review every two years and address issues arising	Equal pay reviews will be conducted every two years and gender-related statistically significant differences in pay (as determined by NISRA) will be considered by SMG	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Ongoing. Status: Complete Analysis has been completed by NISRA and was considered by SMG in February 2022.

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Senior Women’s Network	4) Implement Senior Women’s Network (AG4 and above) to meet at least twice a year.	To have in place a network that enables issues to be identified, discussed and – if appropriate – solutions proposed or raised at the appropriate platform; and where good practice can be shared and highlighted.	<p>Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group.</p> <p>Timeline: Every six months.</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> <p>This action has been superseded by a number of other measures, outlined in the previous update, which have been put in place and address the original issue identified and the planned outcome. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arranging for Assembly Commission staff to have the option of joining the NICS Women’s Network; -Ongoing role of the cross-Directorate Gender Action Implementation Group in identifying and considering gender issues across the Assembly Commission; - Ongoing provision of opportunity for staff to participate in external coaching and mentoring programmes; -Implementation of the Assembly Commission’s People Manager Programme.

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Awards	5) Consider third party recognition awards and apply for awards as appropriate.	Application process completed and submission made.	<p>Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group.</p> <p>Timeline: Each award has a related timeline.</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> <p>See Stonewall and Diversity NI updates below.</p>
	6) Apply for Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark	<p>Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark achieved.</p> <p>Actions identified to progress to Silver Diversity NI Charter Mark within two years</p>	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit/HR.</p> <p>Timeline: Bronze by October 2019.</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> <p>Following consideration, the decision has been taken not to proceed with the application to achieve the Diversity NI Charter Mark.</p>
Menopause Policy <i>Action added October 2019</i>	7) Develop a Menopause Policy to provide support and assistance to staff and managers	Menopause Policy is developed and issued to staff.	<p>Lead: Human Resources Office/Equality and Good Relations Unit</p> <p>Timeline: December 2020.</p> <p>Status: Overdue</p>

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
			<p>Original timeline not met due to resourcing issues.</p> <p>The policy development process commenced in June 2021, with the research phase. However, staffing issues led to a delay in the submission of the first draft. Work has commenced on the draft policy and guidance and it is anticipated that it will be complete at the end of the Summer recess 2022. The draft policy has been issued to the Human Resource Office for comment and a further meeting with the Deputy Head of Human Resources and the Equality Manager took place in April 2022.</p>
Transgender – Inclusion in the Workplace	8) Participate in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.	Through participation in this programme, the Assembly Commission would have access to a programme which offers organisations tailored one-to-one support to help build workplaces that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR Office.</p> <p>Timeline: Ongoing for lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>Status: Complete.</p> <p>The purpose of joining the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme was to be able to access assistance and support in the development of the</p>

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
			Transgender Policy and Guidance. As this is now complete, membership for 2022 was not renewed.
Development of a Transgender Policy	9) Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff	<p>Lead: Human Resources Office and Equality Unit.</p> <p>Timeline: March 2020.</p> <p>Status: Not achieved</p> <p>The draft Transgender Policy and Guidance was developed and on 27 May 2021 was approved by SMG for consultation with staff and a small number of Transgender groups. The draft policy and guidance was issued by HR to TUS for consultation in September 2021 and staff consultation commenced on 4 October and concluded on 29 October 2021.</p> <p>The final version of the policy and guidance was tabled at the February 2022 SMG meeting and</p>

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
			is currently under consideration by SMG.
Raise awareness around transgender issues	10) Provide training to staff on transgender issues once Policy developed.	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission Policy	<p>Lead: Human Resources Office.</p> <p>Timeline: On approval/issue of Transgender Policy.</p> <p>Status: Overdue</p> <p>Learning and Development will work with the Equality Unit on training content, quality assurance and source general online training for all staff and specific training for front-facing staff once the draft Transgender Policy is approved.</p>
Research	11) Participate in QUB PhD Project 'Gender equality in the UK and Germany: HR Management in light of conflicting constitutional logics'	Through participation in the project, the Assembly Commission will have feedback via anonymised employees' insights on gender equality in the organisation and relevant HR policies, which could be used to inform any further actions that may be required.	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR Office.</p> <p>Timeline: In line with QUB requirements.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p> <p>Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Gender research project 'Gender</p>

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
			<p><i>equality in the UK and Germany: HR Management in light of conflicting constitutional logics'</i> was delayed. However, a research summary was received from the QUB researcher on 15 September 2021. The research has now concluded and a meeting is to be arranged between the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services and the QUB researcher to discuss findings.</p>

Reporting and Monitoring			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	12) Provide progress update to SMG every six months	Every six months, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMG/, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit.</p> <p>Timeline: Every six months, generally March and October every year.</p> <p>Status: Complete for reporting period</p>
	13) Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress	As part of annual report to the Equality Commission, provide full update of Directorate activity against Action Plan targets.	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit.</p> <p>Timeline: Annually by 31 August.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p> <p>Work on the annual equality progress report for the 2021-22 period has commenced and Directorate activity against Action Plan targets will be included.</p>
Central administration and co-ordination of work of Gender Action Implementation Group	14) Co-ordinate and oversee the roll-out of implementation of the Action Plan	<p>Co-ordination of meetings and work of the Implementation Group;</p> <p>Support provided to business areas where necessary;</p> <p>Progress of business areas tracked against targets; and</p>	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit.</p> <p>Timeline: Ongoing for lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>Status: Complete for reporting period</p>

		Written updates to SMG on progress against specific actions every six months.	The GAPIG met on 23 February 2022. Agreed minutes are available here on Assist. Six-monthly monitoring updates were provided to SMG.
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Appendix 4: Recommendations of the AERC Report on Women and Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly 2015

Recommendations for Political Parties in Northern Ireland

1. The Committee recommended that political parties should consider developing targeted membership strategies to encourage more women to get involved and become members of their parties.
2. The Committee recognised that high profile female MLAs can act as positive role models and recommended that political parties should take this into account when making political appointments in the Assembly.
3. The Committee recommended that political parties should strive to develop mentoring programmes for aspiring politicians both at local government and within the Assembly.
4. The Committee recommended that initiatives designed to increase female candidacies are widely known and extensively promoted within a party, are given strong positive and public support by the party leadership and are communicated to supporters.
5. The Committee recommended that political parties review their internal media strategy to ensure greater visibility of female politicians.
6. The Committee recommended that, if not already provided, political parties should consider the introduction of diversity awareness training, advice and support available to party members involved in the candidate selection process.
7. The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider the introduction of measures to increase the number of female candidates being put forward for election. However, the Committee recognised that the decision on which, if any, measures to introduce remained a decision for the political parties.
8. The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider collecting and publishing anonymised diversity data on candidates.

9. The Committee recommended that if not already in place, political parties should develop policies relating to maternity and paternity leave for politicians and party staff.

10. The Committee recommended that political parties should develop procedures for dealing sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying if these are not already in place. Recommendations for the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Recommendations for the Northern Ireland Assembly

11. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to engage with young women and school girls to discover why they are not engaging in political life and what positive initiatives could be brought forward as a result.

12. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider adopting measures from local, national and international best practice to create a gender sensitive Northern Ireland Assembly.

13. The Committee recommended that all initiatives designed to increase and support women in the Northern Ireland Assembly should be given strong support from the Assembly leadership.

14. Furthermore the Committee recommended that, where possible, the Assembly should consider how it can support political parties in implementing the recommendations from this Review.

15. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should establish a working group on a gender sensitive parliament. The working group should have equal membership of male and female MLAs.

16. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should conduct a gender survey across all Members to identify the key barriers and challenges and, based on the feedback received, develop a gender action plan with specific measures to help Members balance family life with their political career.

17. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should undertake a review of voting mechanisms used in other legislatures as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings.

18. The Committee recommended that following the next Assembly elections, the Assembly should carry out an anonymous survey of all candidates to identify the barriers and challenges they encountered.
19. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to develop and deliver training and capacity building programmes to assist female MLAs in carrying out their role as elected public representatives.
20. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider targeted engagement with the media, civil society and schools to profile the work of female MLAs.
21. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider hosting at least one annual event to highlight the work of female politicians. This could coincide with either International Women's Day or during Parliamentary Week.
22. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should ensure, where possible, gender representation be considered when agreeing official delegations from the Assembly.
23. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should facilitate the creation of a women's parliamentary caucus.
24. The Committee recommended that the Assembly through Assembly Research and Information Services should assist Committees undertake gender based analysis of public policies and budgets.

Recommendations for the Northern Ireland Executive

25. The Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure that its future childcare and gender equality strategies are designed, delivered and appropriately funded to enable women at all levels of society to balance their caring responsibilities with a career in politics.
26. The Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure improved information sharing, monitoring and accountability in the implementation of the new gender equality strategy across all departments to ensure that all strategic objectives are met within the agreed timescales and that lessons are learned from the implementation of the existing Gender Equality Strategy (2006-2016).

27. The Committee recommended that Executive Ministers should state their commitment to addressing gender inequality in Northern Ireland.

28. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in Executive policies and legislation development.

29. The Committee recommended that the Executive should take steps to increase the diversity of public bodies and in particular introduce measures to address the gender imbalance in public appointments in Northern Ireland.

Appendix 5: Progress on Assembly and Executive Review Committee Recommendations on Promoting the Participation of Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly 2019

AERC Recommendations	Assembly’s position	Examples from other legislatures
<p>No. 11 Identification of possible proposals to engage with young women and school girls to discover why they are not engaging in political life and what positive initiatives could be brought forward as a result</p>	<p>The Education Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘Let’s Talk’ panel events - With DfC and Politics Plus events to mark centenary of the Representation of the People Act (1918) - ‘Politics in Action’ shared education project. <p>The Engagement Unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assembly Women’s Week, January 2015 - 10th Annual Conference of the Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network, October 2016 - Women and Children Takeover Parliament Buildings, March 2018 - Assembly Community Connect - Reel Politics short films, with Belfast City Council <p>Politics Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young Female Leaders Academy October 2015 - The Next Chapter project, with Irish Rural Link and NICVA 	<p>Scottish Parliament/Young Women’s Movement Young Women Lead programme; National Assembly for Wales/Chwarae Teg LeadHership programme.</p>
<p>No. 12 The Assembly should consider adopting measures from local, national and</p>	<p>No action yet as relates to a range of elements within the responsibility of different Assembly bodies e.g. procedural issues (timing of sittings or</p>	<p>Gender-sensitive parliament audit carried out by the Houses of Parliament.</p>

international best practice to create a gender sensitive NI Assembly.	voting arrangements) are not within the control of the Assembly Commission.	
No. 13 All initiatives designed to increase and support women in the Northern Ireland Assembly should be given strong support from the Assembly leadership	<p>'Assembly leadership' could be interpreted in different ways. Support to initiatives by the Assembly Commission and Speaker have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation to Rosemary Butler, Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, to speak about work in support of women in public life • Speaker correspondence to the Committee on Procedures to consider provisions for ensuring female representation among Speakers and Deputy Speakers • Speaker correspondence with parties to be mindful of female representation when selecting candidates • Support to the formation of a Women's Caucus • 'Assembly Women's Week' in 2016 • International Women's Day marked • Great hall used for an exhibition on the suffrage movement 	Gender action plan in the Swedish Riksdag
No. 14 Where possible, the Assembly should consider how it can support political parties in implementing the recommendations from this Review	Not all parties would welcome Assembly support on internal party matters. Outreach and Education Services and Politics Plus have invited all political parties to initiatives in the promotion of women's participation.	OSCE handbook for political parties.
No. 15 The Assembly should establish a working group on a gender sensitive parliament. The	A working group was established in February 2016. Following the 2016 election, consideration was given as to whether the working group was	Swedish Riksdag Speaker's Reference Group for Gender Equality Issues.

working group should have equal membership of male and female MLAs	the best vehicle for this task, or whether a Women's Caucus should take it forward.	
No. 16 Gender Survey of all Assembly Members	No action as unclear who is responsible.	As part of Member surveys in the Swedish Riksdag and the Houses of Parliament.
No. 17 The Assembly should undertake a review of voting mechanisms used in other legislatures as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings	Committee on Procedures considered electronic voting in 2014 and agreed not to proceed.	'Decision time' in the Scottish Parliament. Sitting times in the Swedish Riksdag. Flexible voting in the Spanish Congress of Deputies.
No. 18 Following the next Assembly elections, carry out an anonymous survey of all candidates to identify the barriers and challenges they encountered.	No action as outside remit of Assembly Commission.	Multi-national Comparative Candidate Survey.
No. 19 The Assembly should develop training and capacity building programmes to assist female MLAs in carrying out their roles as elected public representatives.	Member development coordinated by Politics Plus on behalf of the Assembly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women in Politics Leadership Programme - Women in Public Life Programme - Ambassadors' Forums - Think Tank sessions - Be Seen Be Heard Programme 	Women for Election in the Republic of Ireland.
No. 20 The Assembly should consider targeted engagement with the media, civil society and schools to profile the work of female MLAs	Women MLAs are encouraged to attend Education and Engagement activities.	'A Day in the Life', House of Lords. Profiles of female Members in the Houses of Parliament. Shadowing of female AMs in the National Assembly for Wales.
No. 21 The Assembly should consider hosting at least one annual event to highlight the work of female politicians this could coincide with either International Women's Day or during Parliamentary Week	The Assembly has marked International Women's Day in 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019, including associated events during the week of International Women's Day.	Debates on International Women's Day in the House of Lords and Scottish Parliament. Event in the National Assembly for Wales to celebrate the achievements of women. Inter-parliamentary meeting at the European Parliament focussing on young women in politics.

<p>No. 22 Ensure, where possible, gender representation be considered when agreeing appointment of Ministers, and Assembly posts including a Speaker, Deputy Speakers, Assembly Commission and Committee Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons.</p>	<p>No position as each Assembly body makes its own decisions and selections of delegations, this is the same for party nominations to individual bodies.</p>	<p>Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities rules with regard to delegations.</p>
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Appendix 6: Assembly Women's Caucus Manifesto and Action Plan

5 Element 1 - Processes that Facilitate the Participation of both Women and Men

- Introduce a formal mechanism by which the Caucus can bring forward issues of concern to the Assembly, in relation to its special remit for policies, legislation and budgets from a gender perspective;
- Support the Caucus in leading on a review of voting mechanisms – including proxy voting - used in other legislatures as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings as per Recommendation 17 of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee report;
- Support the Caucus to bring forward for debate the use of gender quota for elections as used in the Republic of Ireland since 2012 (*Electoral (Amendment) Political Funding Act 2012*);
- Support the Caucus to engage with current efforts and processes relating to the renewal of a Gender Strategy for Northern Ireland, as called for in the *New Decade New Approach (2020)* agreement.
- Support the Caucus to work with the Assembly Communication Office to ensure gender-specific media representation for women MLAs.

6 Element 2 - Actions that Promote Equality and Participation

- Provide gender equality awareness in political representation training as part of Member development, and with Assembly staff;
- Continue to support the delivery of training, mentoring and professional coaching support specific to the needs of women MLAs as part of the Caucus' work programme as per Recommendation 19 of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee report;

- Support the Caucus regarding initiatives related to aspiring individual women politicians in collaboration with civil society as per Recommendation 3 of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee report;
- Support the Caucus to provide a young women's caucus structure to support young women and girls sitting on the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly; and
- Support the Caucus and the Assembly's Communication Office to develop targeted engagement with the media, civil society, schools and other relevant stakeholders to profile the work of women MLAs.

7 Element 3 - An Environment that is Accessible to both Women and Men

- Provide financial support for a photographic portrait of all current and former women MLAs to then be displayed in a prominent position within Stormont Parliament Buildings;
- Encourage the participation of all MLAs in parliamentary events relating to International Women's Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and other days of awareness and/or celebration relating to gender equality.
- Commit to a yearly short-term audit of the language and behaviours used in the Assembly Chambers to identify any issue which might be considered harmful in relation to gender equality in participation;
- Provide family rooms and rooms for breastfeeding or expressing milk for MLAs and Assembly staff; and
- Provide leave for all MLAs who recently have become parents.

8 Element 4 - Gender-sensitive Political Parties and Politicians

Support the Caucus to work with individual parties as per Recommendation 3 of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee report.

- Targeted membership strategies to encourage more women to get involved and become members of their parties;
- Initiatives and measures designed to increase women candidacies which are publicly supported by the party leadership.
- Diversity awareness training, advice and support available to party members involved in the candidate selection process.
- Initiatives designed to ensure inclusion of positive women role models when making political appointments; and
- Gender-proofing of party internal media strategies to ensure greater visibility of their women politicians.

Appendix 7: Conclusions and Recommendations of the UK Parliament Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Our report reflects the data we reviewed, as well as our own experiences and those of the colleagues with whom we have discussed these issues. We are aware that experiences vary and are careful in our report not to make sweeping generalisations. We strongly recommend that, in developing an action plan in response to the report, the Commissions consult widely across Parliament on how our recommendations might best be implemented.

CHAPTER 2: NUMBERS AND POSITIONS OF MPS AND PEERS

2. We welcome the steady progress that has been made to increase the proportion of female MPs and peers but note that a number of barriers remain to equal female representation in Parliament.

3. The following factors appeared to us to be particularly noteworthy in putting women off standing as an MP or putting themselves forward to the House of Lords Appointments Commission:

- a. The culture of Parliament as highlighted in recent reports of bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment;
- b. The challenges that working in Parliament poses for family life, including the unpredictability of business and potential long hours (with measures to date tending to benefit those who live in and around London);
- c. The financial impact of standing for Parliament (particularly for disabled candidates); and
- d. Online threats and threats to physical security, in particular genderbased intimidation, harassment and violence against female parliamentarians and female candidates.

4. We also recognise that some of these factors are an issue for women and men, and that they can also affect individuals from diverse backgrounds to

different degrees. We think that this only lends weight to the argument that they should be tackled.

5. We recommend in Chapter 3 a series of actions that should be taken by Parliament in response to factors a, b and d above to: address fundamentally the concerns about bullying and harassment highlighted in recent reports; make parliamentary life better for families; and support parliamentarians who experience threats.

6. Campaign financing (factor c) is not a matter for the parliamentary authorities. However, we are aware of efforts by the Government to reduce financial barriers for disabled candidates via the Access to Elected Office Fund, and we consider there should be a further extension of this scheme beyond summer 2019.

7. Although attracting candidates is predominantly a matter for political parties or the House of Lords Appointments Commission, we believe there is a role for the Education and Engagement Team, the two Communications teams, and the Parliamentary Digital Service in demonstrating visibly that people from all backgrounds are welcome, including:

- a. Greater engagement with organisations supporting the increased diversity and inclusivity of Parliament;
- b. Continuing existing efforts to make the parliamentary website more accessible and inclusive; and
- c. Ensuring outreach and social media activity captures the work of parliamentarians in all their diversity (this is explored further in Chapter 3).

8. When we compare the proportion of women in leadership positions in the Commons and Lords against the proportion of female MPs and peers, there does not seem to be a particular obstacle to either women or men taking up these positions.

9. One exception is the Panel of Chairs in the Commons. Although we believe that to achieve gender parity the focus should be on removing barriers for women to take up positions of leadership in Parliament, rather than on quotas or targets, we note that it would be straightforward for the Panel of Chairs to be

made more diverse over time, as decisions about membership lie within the gift of the Speaker.

10. In the Commons, there does not appear to be a barrier to women joining select committees (apart from that of time). Political parties, which organise the informal mechanisms by which committee membership is decided in practice, should routinely assure themselves that women continue to have the same opportunities to serve on committees as men, according to their interest and expertise.

11. The system in the Lords, however, was considered to be more reliant on patronage, which tends to discriminate against minority groups. The Lords might therefore consider reforming their system as follows:

- a. Establishing a single, transparent process for nominating committee membership; and
- b. More frequent turnover of committee membership.

12. We also recommend the introduction of a general principle that select committees should not meet before 9.30am, so that parliamentarians have an equal opportunity to take part in them, irrespective of childcare responsibilities.

13. We consider that it would be appropriate for a parliamentary body to monitor the gender breakdown of MPs and peers and those in leadership positions, and to publish the results. We recommend that the Women and Equalities Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights should consider exercising their existing power to meet jointly to carry out this task on an annual basis.

14. To assist with this monitoring, we add our voice to calls to implement section 106 of the Equality Act 2010, which requires parties to publish data on the diversity of candidates standing for election. This could also be voluntarily extended to include appointments to the Lords, for example by political parties publishing the gender balance of appointment candidates.

15. We highlight the importance of intersectionality when discussing gender sensitivity. People's identities are not one-dimensional. A person's age, race,

sexuality, disability and socio-economic status may also present additional barriers to them entering Parliament, and this should be recognised proactively. One way to help achieve diversity might, for example, be empowering women who already have established careers as well as those who might wish to build their careers within Parliament.

16. The House Administrations may wish to consider what data might be collected to allow future audits to take account of the experiences of individuals of other gender identities and greater consideration of intersectionality in discussing people's experiences in Parliament.

17. We recommend that Erskine May should include a new chapter in future editions on gender sensitivity.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND POLICIES

18. The challenge of balancing working in Parliament with family life is a fundamental issue. It affects MPs and peers who are mothers and fathers, as well as older parliamentarians and many Administration, MPs' and peers' staff whose working hours are connected to sittings of the two chambers. Crucially, it also has a profound impact on their families.

19. Increasing the predictability of parliamentary business would improve the inclusivity of Parliament and benefit the families of those who work here. It would also give parliamentarians greater scope to focus on their wider parliamentary and constituency duties.

20. Recent changes to sitting hours have benefitted MPs who are based in London but not helped those who live further away. We noted, however, that it would be impossible to come up with a set of hours that would work for everyone. Reforms should therefore focus on greater predictability and more efficient use of time.

21. As a first step, a review should be undertaken in each House to consider how efficient it is at carrying out its business and assess options for reform such as:

- a. More advance notice of the parliamentary calendar, including setting expected sitting days up to a year in advance;
- b. More predictability in, and advance notice of, the scheduling of business, including a set time for voting (although the benefits of the current system were noted regarding the potential for MPs to cast their vote in response to arguments made during the debate) and a time set aside for “important questions”;
- c. Compressing the sitting week into fewer days;
- d. More closely aligning recess dates and school holidays, to increase the ability of members from all parts of the United Kingdom to spend time with their families; and
- e. Setting expectations in relation to committee workload, including in relation to consideration of committee reports and the timing of Committee visits.

22. At the time of agreeing our report, the House of Commons had not yet considered a substantive motion to implement its decision in principle to allow new parents to vote in a division by proxy. Such a motion should be brought forward immediately. MPs taking leave from the House in this way should not be subject to any reduction in their staffing budgets, as the work of their offices is likely, if anything, to increase during this time.

23. We also consider that the parties should look to reinforce informal pairing arrangements for other caring needs; and recommend that consideration be given by the House of Commons to how, where pairing is used, the members in question might have their vote “by pair” formally recorded.

24. Developing a parliamentary policy for children and families, informed by good practice in other parliaments, would be an initial first step to a more family-friendly institution and would also address safeguarding concerns. Such a policy should include the following:

- a. Clearer guidance on what is allowed, including a provision that infant feeding should be allowed everywhere;

- b. A clear statement of safeguarding issues and expectations around supervision, including consideration of whether children and family members could be passholders; and
- c. An enhanced commitment and joined up approach to the provision of childcare.

25. Facilities should be provided which support the policy. We would expect these to include:

- a. Better facilities for expressing milk (including for visitors);
- b. Retaining the Family Rooms as dedicated spaces for families but with improvements and more consistent enforcement of their use for these purposes;
- c. Provision for children and family members of different ages (including older children);
- d. An information tool for parents working in Parliament; and e. More facilities that support the needs of parliamentarians that stem from unsociable hours.

26. Away from the parliamentary estate, we encourage IPSA to give consideration to how the childcare needs of MPs whose family life is unavoidably split between Westminster and their constituency might better be supported. This would be a natural extension of IPSA's recent decision to take account of the different accommodation needs of MPs, which we welcome. IPSA should also give consideration to the means in which these claims are reported, so that no-one in need is deterred from accessing support.

27. We note the extreme seriousness of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct for our Parliament and others around the world. We welcome the focus that is being put on these issues via the report of Dame Laura Cox into the bullying and harassing of House of Commons staff and the establishment of two further inquiries into the experiences of others working in Parliament. Parliament must take the findings and recommendations of these inquiries

extremely seriously and take concrete action in response, rather than hiding from the problem.

28. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has expressed public concern that due regard may not have been given by the House of Commons authorities to the duties of public authorities under the Equality Act to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This was exemplified by the report of Dame Laura Cox into the bullying and harassment of House staff, which although only advisory went to the heart of the management of the elected House. We believe that both Houses have a duty to apply to themselves the important and fundamental parts of the Equality Act, including section 19, that they spent so much time discussing.

29. In doing so, Parliament should consider how MPs and peers might be supported to ensure they exercise comparable duties towards their own staff; and ensure political parties aren't forgotten.

30. We welcome the IPU's new report on Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in parliaments of Europe, which provides data and examples of parliamentary good practices.

31. In responding to the Cox report, and those of the forthcoming inquiries, the parliamentary authorities should:

- a. Examine what other Parliaments have done, including the examples set out in the IPU's report on Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in parliaments, and adopt good practice; and
- b. Examine the recommendations arising from the Women and Equalities Committee inquiry into sexual harassment and respond.

32. From our own discussions, measures might include (but not be limited to):
- a. Better support for whistle-blowers;
 - b. Acknowledging that not all staff will want to report complaints formally, a means by which staff can raise issues, such as via surveys or feedback;
 - c. Proactive communication on where members' and Administration staff can seek HR and external forms of support, and making the HR Advisory Service available for MPs in the Customer Hub;
 - d. Training for staff on having difficult conversations and for line managers on how to support them; and
 - e. Support for Administration staff who are required to enforce the rules of the two Houses, such as around pass-wearing.
 - f. Stronger communication about the training that is available for members and all staff. Moreover, noting that all those who hold a parliamentary pass are required to undertake compulsory training on fire safety, passholders should be required to confirm that they have completed a training course on bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment, either via an external provider such as ACAS or an internal course.
33. We welcome the new Behaviour Code for Parliament that has been designed to apply to all those working in or visiting Parliament. We recognise, however, the need to ensure the operation of a seamless duty of care for political party staff, regardless of the location in which they are working. We recommend that political parties adopt their own codes with parallel language to ensure consistent treatment of those working in the political arena.
34. We recommend that the parliamentary authorities take steps to ensure that:
- MPs, peers and all staff are aware of the support available from their local police and the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team to address abuse and threats via social media, as well as other appropriate support from the Members' Security Support Service and Health Assured, the Employee Assistance Programme.

- This support is kept under review to keep step with digital innovations.

35. Although it is outside the scope of our audit, we would support efforts to strengthen electoral law so that it is fully fit to address the challenges that parliamentary candidates may face in the digital age.

36. We consider that the Speaker's guide to behaviour in the Chamber in the Commons, and a parallel guide to be established in the Lords, could provide a framework for defining what is and is not acceptable, with a role for the Whips, the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers, and all members in proactively challenging and calling out behaviour that does not meet the agreed standard.

37. Although we support retaining the use of impersonal language in the chambers to encourage courtesy, how this is achieved should be a matter of further consideration.

38. We recommend that adequate time should be given to front-bench members to be seated in the House of Commons chamber during the transition between items of business, so that the public perception of the business of the chamber is that it is orderly and dignified.

39. The number of questions, speeches and interventions in both Houses should be measured by gender using data from the Official Report, in order to analyse whether members from one gender are disproportionately represented. In the light of the findings, consideration should then be given to possible steps that might be taken to ensure that any barriers to intervening are addressed, including the method by which parliamentarians indicate they want to speak.

40. We welcome the progress that has been made in relation to increasing the number of artworks of and by women in the Parliamentary Art Collection, for example the New Dawn commission and the modern artwork in Portcullis House. However, we noted that the Palace of Westminster is a heritage building and, in our view, it is appropriate that the artwork hanging there reflects that fact.

41. We noted that the Restoration & Renewal programme is an opportunity to continue progress in increasing the inclusivity of parliamentary artwork.

42. We welcome the efforts of the Education and Engagement Team, the Communications teams, and the Parliamentary Digital Service to be gender sensitive in their work to open up Parliament to the public. We recommend that, to ensure this is undertaken consistently, the Team develops a formal policy on public engagement and gender, including a means of monitoring compliance with the policy.

CHAPTER 4: GENDER MAINSTREAMING

43. Parliament has many of the processes in place that allow it to take account of gender issues in its legislative and scrutiny functions. We particularly welcome the establishment of the Women and Equalities Committee on a permanent footing in 2017.

44. Building on the good practice which was highlighted in our evidence base, select committees should make every possible effort to ensure that female witnesses and those from other diverse groups are not prevented from contributing to their inquiries, either by being overlooked in favour of the “usual suspects” or by being put off from putting themselves forward. We understand that the Lords Liaison Committee is expected to consider proposals on how Lords committees might monitor this more routinely: we support this.

45. To support parliamentarians to take account of gender impacts in their work, information should be made more readily available on the different groups or organisations in Parliament with specialist knowledge, brought together in one place and clearly signposted.

46. Existing Continuous Professional Development options for MPs and peers should be publicised or expanded as appropriate to include, for example, unconscious bias, equality legislation and witness questioning techniques. Such provision could be different in the Commons and Lords.

47. We were pleased to note from the data made available to us that there does not appear to be a gender barrier to delegation travel. However, we do consider that more could be done to make it easier for parents to participate.

48. New select committee travel guidelines should be introduced by the Liaison Committees of each House, with international organisations encouraged to do the same. Guidelines might include:

- a. Restricting travel to weekdays where possible;
- b. Restricting travel to parliamentary sitting time where possible (although we had differing views as to whether this would be helpful);
- c. Introducing a provision whereby additional childcare costs incurred in the course of select committee travel may be claimed; and
- d. Proactively promoting existing provisions from international assemblies or associations to assist with childcare.

CHAPTER 5: NUMBERS AND POSITIONS OF STAFF, POLICIES AND PLANS

49. We are aware that statistics about bullying and harassment of staff of the House of Commons or House of Lords are published from time to time in response to Freedom of Information requests, but, so far as we know, these statistics have not been broken down by gender. We ask the House Administrations to consider whether this might be possible in future, given that this information will presumably be available to those raising formal complaints through the new channels open to staff of both Houses.

50. We welcome the initiatives undertaken by both Houses to improve the diversity of staff but note that the current pace of change to increase the number of women in senior positions in the House of Lords Administration in particular is unacceptable, including on the Management Board.

51. In order to ensure that childcare commitments are not a barrier to career progression, the two Administrations should consider what more support should be provided, specifically for women returning to work from maternity leave, drawing on best practice from elsewhere.

52. While we welcome the fact that opportunities for development are formally “gender-blind”, they should be advertised and awarded in a transparent manner so as to be genuinely open to all staff, regardless of their circumstances.

Section 3:

Senior Management Group/Team Papers

Unrestricted

Submission Number: SMG15508

Paper Submitted by: Director of Corporate Services

Subject: Development of a Transgender Policy

Date for discussion: SMG meeting on 17 December 2019

Recommendation/Purpose

Recommendation: - SMG is asked to approve the key principles for the development of a Transgender Policy by the Equality Unit and Human Resources Office. If approval is given, the policy will be developed in line with the policy development timetable shown at Annex 1.

Preceding

Papers/Discussions: The draft Gender Action Plan 2019-23, which included an action to develop a Transgender Policy, was considered by SMG on 26 March 2019.

Timescale: Routine.

Fol Implications: Fully disclosable.

Legal Implications: This paper contributes to meeting our obligations under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

Financial Implications: There are no costs associated with development of the Transgender Policy, however future training to staff will incur a cost.

Staffing Implications: None identified at this point.

Equality / Section 75 Implications:

The actions outlined in this paper should contribute to meeting our obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in particular the category of sexual orientation.

Equality Screening: The Transgender Policy will be subject to equality screening, to be carried out as development of the Policy progresses.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA): DPIA will be conducted as part of the policy development process.

Consultation: Consultation will be undertaken in line with the process set out at Annex 1.

Attachments: Annex 1: Transgender Policy development timetable

Executive Summary

- *The development of a Transgender Policy has been carried forward from the 2016-18 Gender Action Plan (GAP) and is a key action for the 2019-23 GAP which was approved by the Assembly Commission in April 2019. It will also fulfill an action for the Diversity Mark NI's Bronze application and contribute positively to the completion of Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index.*
- *A Transgender Policy will provide support, advice and guidance for both staff and line managers.*
- *This paper sets out key principles for consideration in the development of a Transgender Policy for approval by SMG*

Background

1. In February/March 2014, a survey was carried out by RaISe on the perceived barriers or difficulties experienced by Secretariat staff relating to gender equality. The report on the findings of the research, which was overseen by the Gender Action Steering Group, was published in March 2014. Responses to the survey suggested that the Assembly Commission should have in place a Policy to support transgender staff and visitors and treat transphobia as a disciplinary offence.
2. Having considered literature on gender identity and the RaISe report of March 2014, the Gender Action Steering Group included the following actions in the 2016-18 Gender Action Plan¹:

Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/ measurement	Lead	Timeline
Development of a Transgender Policy	Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff	HR Office	March 2017
Raise awareness around transgender issues	Provide training to staff on transgender issues once policy developed	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission policy	HR Office	March 2017

¹ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/corporate/gender-action-plan/gender-action-plan.pdf>

3. Development of the policy was postponed in agreement with Trade Union Side through the Employee Relations Group to give priority to the Domestic Violence Policy. As a consequence, the actions at paragraph 2 were not completed within the timeframe of the GAP 2016-18 and have been carried forward to the 2019-23 GAP, which was approved by the Assembly Commission on 11 April 2019.
4. The development of a Transgender Policy was included as a target for Diversity Mark NI's Bronze award application, which was submitted in October 2019. In addition, the development of the policy will contribute positively to the completion of Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index as part of its Diversity Champion's Programme.
5. Until a formal policy is in place, the HR Office will continue to refer to the LGB&T Toolkit developed by NIPSA, which includes a detailed section on Transgender in the Workplace².

Discussion/Recommendations

6. The Equality Unit has undertaken research on similar policies that are in place in other jurisdictions. Both the National Assembly for Wales and the Houses of Parliament have provided their policies, though the latter is under review and a revised policy is expected to be issued by the end of the year. The Scottish Parliament is in the process of developing and consulting on its policy, which it hopes to have in place in 2020. Policies and protocols that are in place in other organisations such as Belfast City Council, Belfast Metropolitan College, Queen's University Belfast and the Education Authority have also been considered. In addition, reference has been made to the NIPSA toolkit and the advice and guidance available to the Assembly Commission as members of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.
7. Themes identified from the policies and protocols considered include:
 - the commitment to equality for transgender people and a clear statement that transphobic abuse, bullying or harassment will be treated seriously and dealt with under appropriate organisational procedures;
 - an assurance that the confidentiality of the employee will be respected, and no personal information will be disclosed without consent;
 - information on how absences from work will be managed;
 - an outline of the support available for a transgender person. A number of policies advocate the use of a template or action plan for managing the transition, which is written by the transgender person and their manager or main support contact. These address a range of issues such as the dates the employee may be absent from work; how to

² https://nipso.org.uk/attachments/article/149/Ref-A4_0332_4.pdf

Unrestricted

Submission Number: SMG15508

manage communications with colleagues; the changing of organisational records; and practical matters such as dress codes or uniform requirements.

8. Subject to the agreement of SMG, it is proposed that the Transgender Policy should be developed based on the following key principles:

i. General Provisions

- The Policy should address matters relating to both Assembly Commission staff and others who may visit or use Parliament Buildings.
- The Policy should reference the appropriate legislation including:
 - The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of their sex in the following key areas:
 - employment
 - training and related matters
 - education
 - provision of goods, facilities or services
 - the disposal and management of premises
 - The Gender Reassignment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 which amended the Sex Discrimination Order to make it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of gender reassignment in employment and training. The Sex Discrimination (Amendment of Legislation) Regulations 2008 extended protection from discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment to the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises.
 - Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act which promotes equality of opportunity for all.
 - Data Protection Act 1998, under which transgender would constitute 'sensitive data'.
- Definitions and terminology will be provided in an appendix to the policy. Language relating to gender identity can change quickly, so a separate appendix can be updated as and when necessary.

ii. Secretariat Staff

- The aim of the Policy is to provide support to staff and managers and to create a workplace environment that is safe, inclusive and supportive of all staff.

Unrestricted

Submission Number: SMG15508

- The Policy will explain the relationship/interaction with other Human Resources Policies including, for example, Equal Opportunities (including equality monitoring); Dignity at Work; Special Leave; Managing Attendance; Conduct; and Discipline. In particular, it will set out the consideration that will be given to the practical application of the Managing Attendance Policy where absences result directly from the process of transitioning.
 - The Policy will provide information on the roles and responsibilities of staff, managers and the Human Resources Office.
 - The Policy will address confidentiality and the employee's role in determining when or how information should be shared.
 - The Policy will set out when or how employee records will be updated to reflect gender transition.
 - The Policy will provide information on internal and external advice and support available for staff who are transgender, and practical advice for managers on how they can support staff.
 - The Policy will reflect the right for a member of staff to be addressed by, and to use the facilities associated with, the gender to which they identify.
 - The Policy will signpost staff to external contacts, support groups or sources of help.
- iii. Other users of Parliament Buildings (*including but not limited to Members, Members' staff, witnesses, visitors, contractors*)
- The Policy will emphasise the right of all users of Parliament Buildings to be treated with dignity and respect. They will be addressed by Secretariat staff by the pronouns that they prefer.
 - The Policy will reflect the right of users of Parliament Buildings to be addressed by, and to use the facilities associated with, the gender to which they identify.

Risk/Corporate Governance Issues

9. Implementation of the actions identified through the Gender Action Plan 2019-23 should contribute to compliance with the section 75 duties.

Corporate Governance

10. This area of work is linked to the draft Corporate Strategy through the strategic Aim of "*Building excellence and innovation in our services*" and, in particular to the objective of "*Ensuring high standards in equality,*

Unrestricted

Submission Number: SMG15508

governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes”.

Next Steps /Future Actions

11. If approved by SMG, the policy will be developed in line with the timetable shown at Annex 1. The policy will be developed in consultation with Trade Union Side and a draft policy will be presented to SMG for approval.

AUTHOR: Kathy O’Hanlon, Equality and Good Relations Unit

Transgender Policy Development Timetable

Step	Process	Timescale	Forum
1. Broad principles or draft policy	SMG to be provided with details of the policy to be developed and propose broad principles on its content. SMG will be asked to consider the information and give the Equality Unit and the Human Resources Office sign off to develop the draft policy in accordance with the broad principles	December 2019	SMG meeting
2. Development of Draft Policy	Development of draft policy which will be used for the purpose of consultation. This draft will be developed through the ERG Policy subgroup facilitating early involvement of Trade Union Side. The draft will also be consulted on by other key stakeholders e.g. Equality Manager, Legal Services, Information Standards Manager etc. The draft policy will be sent to SMG to give approval for formal consultation (steps 3 & 4 below)	Within 2 months of SMG meeting	ERG Policy Subgroup
3. TUS Consultation	Draft shared with TUS for formal consultation	For a period of 6 weeks from Step 2	ERG Policy Subgroup
4. Staff consultation	Draft shared with staff for formal consultation. (Staff and public consultation can happen at the same time but must last a minimum of 8 weeks as per equality scheme.)	For a period of 4 weeks from Step 2	A variety of methods may be used including: - Consultation page on Assist - Focus groups with staff
5. External stakeholder consultation	Draft shared with key stakeholders for formal consultation. The consultation	For a period of 8 weeks	Key external stakeholders to be

Unrestricted

Submission Number: SMG15508

	should be held for 8 weeks with stakeholders	from Step 2	consulted as aspects of the policy will apply to visitors as well as staff.
6. Revised draft policy	HR Office to consider feedback received and develop further draft and update the ongoing completion of the equality screening form. This will be presented at ERG for final comments from TUS	Within 6 weeks of end of Steps 3 & 4	ERG meeting
7. Final approval by SMG	The final draft version of the policy and associated equality screening form will be returned to SMG for approval	Next SMG meeting following ERG meeting at Step 6	SMG meeting
8. Communication, promotion and training	<p>The policy will be inserted into the Staff Handbook and communicated to staff.</p> <p>The policy (or a relevant extract) made available for visitors.</p>	Following completion of Step 7	<p>A variety of methods may be used including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Postmaster - Information sessions - Formal training - Clerk/Chief Executive briefings

UNRESTRICTED

Submission Number: SMG17111

Paper submitted by: Director of Corporate Services

Subject: Public Consultation on the draft Transgender Policy

Date for discussion: SMG meeting on 27 May 2021

Recommendation

SMG is asked to approve a public consultation on the draft Transgender Policy. If approval is given the consultation will be conducted in line with the timetable shown at Annex 1.

Preceding Papers/Discussions:	The draft Gender Action Plan 2019-23, which included an action to develop a Transgender Policy, was considered by SMG on 26 March 2019. A key principles paper relating to the development of a Transgender Policy was considered by SMG on 17 December 2019.
Timescale:	Routine.
Fol Implications:	Fully disclosable.
Legal Implications:	This paper contributes to meeting our obligations under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.
Financial/Tax Implications:	There are no costs associated with conducting a public consultation on the draft Transgender Policy.
Staffing Implications:	None identified at this point.
Equality/Section 75 Implications:	This consultation will contribute to the development of a Transgender Policy, which should contribute to meeting our obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in particular the category of gender.
Equality Screening:	Equality screening of the draft Transgender Policy is ongoing and will be complete following consultation and final policy development.
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA):	A DPIA will be completed following consultation and final policy development.

UNRESTRICTED

Submission Number: SMG17111

Consultation: Consultation will be undertaken as detailed in the Policy Development Timetable as set out at Annex 1.

Attachments: Annex 1 Draft Transgender Policy Development Timetable
Annex 2 List of external consultees
Annex 3 Draft Transgender Policy
Annex 4 Draft Guidance for Managers
Annex 5 Draft Guidance for Transgender Visitors
Annex 6 Draft Transgender Terminology and Definitions

Executive Summary

- *A public consultation is a key stage in the development of a Transgender Policy. The development of a Transgender Policy has been carried forward from the 2016-18 Gender Action Plan (GAP) and is a key action for the 2019-23 GAP which was approved by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (“the Commission”) in April 2019. It will also fulfill an action for the Diversity Mark Bronze application and contribute positively to the completion of Stonewall’s Workplace Equality Index.*
- *A public consultation on the draft Transgender Policy will provide insight and guidance from relevant stakeholders that will allow the Commission to move towards a final Transgender Policy which is robust and comprehensive.*
- *This paper sets out key considerations in relation to conducting a public consultation on the draft Transgender Policy with a view for approval by SMG.*

Background

1. In February/March 2014, a survey was carried out by RaISe on the perceived barriers or difficulties experienced by Secretariat staff relating to gender equality. The report on the findings of the research, which was overseen by the Gender Action Steering Group, was published in March 2014. Responses to the survey suggested that the Commission should have in place a Policy to support transgender staff and visitors and treat transphobia as a disciplinary offence.
2. Having considered literature on gender identity and the RaISe report of March 2014, the Gender Action Steering Group included the actions to “Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and

UNRESTRICTED

Submission Number: SMG17111

dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings” and also to “Provide training to staff on transgender issues once policy developed” in the 2016-18 Gender Action Plan¹:

3. Development of the policy was postponed in agreement with Trade Union side through the Employee Relations Group to give priority to the Domestic Violence Policy. As a consequence, the actions at paragraph 2 were not completed within the timeframe of the GAP 2016-18 and have been carried forward to the 2019-23 GAP, which was approved by the Commission on 11 April 2019. In the interim period before a formal policy was developed, the HR Office undertook to refer to the LGB&T Toolkit developed by NIPSA, which includes a detailed section on Transgender in the Workplace².
4. The development of a Transgender Policy was included as a target for Diversity Mark NI’s Bronze award application, which was submitted in October 2019. In addition, the development of the policy will contribute positively to the completion of Stonewall’s Workplace Equality Index as part of its Diversity Champion’s Programme.
5. A paper covering the key principles of a proposed Transgender Policy was submitted by the Equality and Good Relations Unit and approved by SMG in December 2019.
6. Due to resourcing issues, work on the development of a draft Transgender Policy did not commence until November 2020. Initial development of the policy involved a research phase where existing policies from analogous public authorities and organisations were examined for content and structure. The general themes identified from this research were:
 - a commitment to equality for transgender people and a clear statement that transphobic abuse, bullying or harassment will be treated seriously and dealt with under appropriate organisational procedures
 - an assurance that the confidentiality of the employee will be respected, and no personal information will be disclosed without consent
 - information on how absences from work will be managed
 - an outline of the support available for the transgender person. A number of policies advocated the use of a template or action plan for managing the transition, which is written by the transgender person and their manager or main support contact. These address a range of issues such as the dates the employee may be absent from work; how to manage communications with colleagues; the changing of organisational records; and practical matters such as dress codes or uniform requirements.

¹ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/corporate/gender-action-plan/gender-action-plan.pdf>

² https://nipsa.org.uk/attachments/article/149/Ref-A4_0332_4.pdf

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Submission Number: SMG17111

7. Following this research phase, a meeting was held with the Clerk/Chief Executive, Directors, the Equality Manager, the Deputy Head of HR and the author of this paper to review progress. That helpful discussion resulted in the draft Policy appended to this paper.
8. A timeline for the development of the policy has been created and is kept under constant review. At present, it lists the following:

Actions	By When
First draft of policy developed (based on key principles agreed by SMG and further research). Draft policy to SMG for approval to consult	28/05/21
Consultation with Trade Union through ERG Policy Sub Group; consultation with staff and relevant external stakeholders	End-July 2021
Revised Policy (following consultation) to SMG	End-August/September 2021 (dependent on date of ERG meeting)
Policy communicated to staff	September/October 2021
Roll-out of general familiarisation sessions and specific training in collaboration with Assembly Learning and Development Team	October/November 2021

9. Guided by regular communication between the Equality and Good Relations Unit and HR Office, and following informal consultation with key external stakeholders on best practice, a draft Transgender Policy was created in April 2021.
10. The question of support for transgender visitors to Parliament Buildings was considered during development. The decision was taken for guidance relating to this matter to be developed and placed on AssISt alongside other visitor information, with the possibility of the guidance forming part of a future Visitors' Policy. This draft guidance emphasises the same ethos of respect and understanding towards those individuals with a transgender identity. As this may be included in a future policy, it is proposed this guidance should be consulted on alongside the draft Transgender Policy.

Discussion/Recommendation

11. Reflecting the research undertaken and practices from other organisations, the policy includes:

- A commitment to equality for transgender people and a clear statement that transgender abuse, bullying or harassment will be treated seriously and dealt with under the relevant organisational procedures.
- A statement of general principles that all staff members are expected to observe when approaching transgender staff and visitors.
- Clear guidance on how the process of transition³ in the workplace will be handled in terms of record-keeping and managing attendance.
- An outline of the support available to a transgender individual. When this individual is a member of staff, the policy provides a template for line managers to use to help manage the employee's transition in the workplace so that they feel supported throughout.
- An assurance that confidentiality will be employed throughout the process and that the individual is control of any sharing of information related to their gender status.
- A Gender Transition Plan framework to better enable the Commission to adequately support staff who are transitioning.

12. Under the terms of the Commission's Equality Scheme 2016–21, the Commission undertakes to consult on all aspects of the implementation of its statutory equality duties. This includes a commitment to consult on matters arising from its Section 75 obligations.

13. In line with the commitments in the Equality Scheme 2016–21, the consultation should consist of two categories; internal and external. The internal consultation will be with Trade Union Side and staff. The external consultees who will be contacted for their views are listed in Annex 2, however submissions will be welcome from any group or individual who possesses a legitimate interest in the matter.

14. The general objectives of the consultation will be to enable the improvement of the draft Transgender Policy and maximise its comprehensiveness by taking into account the views and suggestions of concerned groups and other stakeholders.

15. More specifically, engaging in consultation will identify any potential concerns around language and terminology used within the draft policy, the appropriateness and robustness of the proposed Gender Transition Plan, and if there are any gaps in relation to support provided to Secretariat staff that need to be addressed.

³ The process by which an individual adopts a new gender identity.

Risks

16. This consultation is a required component of the development of the Transgender Policy, which is an action identified through the Gender Action Plan 2019-23 and should contribute to compliance with the section 75 duties.

Corporate Governance

17. This area of work is linked to the Corporate Strategy 2018-23 through the strategic Aim of *“Building excellence and innovation in our services”* and, in particular to the objective of *“Ensuring high standards in equality, governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes”*.

Next Steps/Future Actions

18. If approved by SMG, the policy will be developed in line with the timetable shown below at Annex 1. The policy will be developed in consultation with Trade Union Side and a draft policy will be presented to SMG for approval.

AUTHOR: Jake Wilson, Equality and Good Relations Unit

Transgender Policy Development Timeline

Step	Process	Timescale	Forum
1. Broad principles or draft policy	SMG to be provided with details of the policy to be developed and propose broad principles on its content. SMG will be asked to consider the information and give the Equality and Good Relations Unit and the Human Resources Office sign off to develop the draft policy in accordance with the broad principles	December 2019	SMG meeting
2. Development of Draft Policy	Development of draft policy which will be used for the purpose of consultation. This draft will be developed through the ERG Policy subgroup facilitating early involvement of Trade Union Side. The draft will also be consulted on by other key stakeholders e.g. Equality and Good Relations Manager, Legal Services Information Standards Manager etc. The draft policy will be sent to SMG to give approval for formal consultation (steps 3, 4 & 5 below)	Within 2 months of SMG meeting Delayed to May 2021	ERG Policy Subgroup
3. TUS Consultation	Draft shared with TUS for formal consultation	For a period of 6 weeks from Step 2	ERG Policy Subgroup
4. Staff consultation	Draft shared with staff for formal consultation. (Staff and public consultation can happen at the same time but must last a minimum of 8 weeks as per Equality Scheme.)	For a period of 4 weeks from Step 2	A variety of methods may be used including: - Consultation page on AssISt - Focus groups with staff

5. External stakeholder consultation	Draft shared with key stakeholders for formal consultation. The consultation should be held for 8 weeks with stakeholders	For a period of 8 weeks from Step 2	Key external stakeholders to be consulted as aspects of the policy will apply to visitors as well as staff.
6. Revised draft policy	HR Office to consider feedback received and develop further draft and update the ongoing completion of the equality screening form. This will be presented at ERG for final comments from TUS	Within 6 weeks of end of Steps 3 & 4	ERG meeting
7. Final approval by SMG	The final draft version of the policy and associated equality screening form will be returned to SMG for approval	Next SMG meeting following ERG meeting at Step 6	SMG meeting
8. Communication, promotion and training	<p>The policy will be inserted into the Staff Handbook and communicated to staff.</p> <p>The policy (or a relevant extract) and made available on AssISt for visitors.</p>	Following completion of Step 7	<p>A variety of methods may be used including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Postmaster - Information sessions - Formal training - Clerk/Chief Executive briefings

List of external consultees

- AffirmNI
- Anchor NI
- Belfast Butterfly Club
- Buoys NI
- Cara-Friend
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Focus: The Identity Trust
- Gender Essence NI
- GenderJam NI
- Rainbow Project
- SAIL NI
- Transgender NI



Northern Ireland Assembly

Annex 3

Staff Handbook Section (TBC)

Introduction

1. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the 'Assembly Commission') is committed to equality of opportunity and to creating an environment where everyone is treated with respect. The Assembly Commission believes that trans staff are entitled to be treated with respect. The Assembly Commission will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment on the grounds of gender identity and/or trans identity. This Policy details how the Assembly Commission will comply with relevant equality legislation and ensure that trans staff are treated with respect and provided with appropriate support.

2. The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Ensure that staff who are undergoing transition (Section 7, below) are treated with fairness and supported in order to create a workplace that is safe, inclusive and supportive to all staff.
- Provide managers with support and guidance on the status of trans staff undergoing the transition process.
- Outline the procedure to be applied whenever staff indicate that they wish to transition.
- Provide details of the support that should be given to staff undergoing transition and explain how this interacts with other Human Resources policies.
- Address how complaints relating to incidents of transphobic bullying or harassment may be raised.

3. Annex 1 to this Policy provides a series of Frequently Asked Questions. In addition, a glossary of terms and guidance for managers on how to manage staff who have indicated that they wish to transition in the workplace is held separately.

Scope of Policy

4. The scope of this Policy includes:

- Assembly Commission staff; and
- Inward secondees, agency workers and contractors.

Legislative Basis

5. The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their sex in the areas of employment, training, education, provision of goods, facilities or services, and the disposal and management of premises. The Gender Reassignment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 amended the Sex Discrimination Order to make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender reassignment¹ in employment and training. The Sex Discrimination (Amendment of Legislation) Regulations 2008 extended protections from discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment to the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises. Additionally, under Section 75 the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Assembly Commission has an obligation to promote equality of opportunity of all, which encompasses matters of gender and trans identity. This view has been endorsed by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

What is trans?

6. Trans is an umbrella term which is used to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois. Trans does not have a more prescriptive definition than this i.e. to be recognised as trans, a person does not have to have undergone gender confirmation surgery or present themselves as their chosen gender.

What does transitioning mean?

7. People who have decided that they wish to live permanently in a different gender from the one they were assigned at birth will undergo a process to be recognised as such. This process is referred to as 'transition'. Although this process can involve medical and surgical treatment to

¹ For the purposes of this Policy, 'gender reassignment' can be considered synonymous with transition.

alter the body, many trans people opt not to undertake medical intervention, and thus transitioning also refers to the social and legal processes related to living permanently in their acquired gender. The Assembly Commission respects and supports all gender identities, whether they involve physical change or not.

8. A decision to begin transitioning is made when staff feel that their gender at birth does not match their gender identity. This is called 'gender dysphoria' and is a recognised medical condition.
9. For many trans people, transitioning does not have an end or a stage by which it is considered finished, but is instead an ongoing process that continues throughout their lives. However, for the purposes of this Policy, staff can be said to have transitioned when they are living fully in the gender identity with which they associate.

Standards of Behaviour that Trans Staff may expect

10. Trans staff must be treated with fairness and dignity and afforded the rights to which they are entitled under law, free from any form of harassment or inappropriate behaviour. Furthermore, through its Equal Opportunities Policy, the Assembly Commission has a commitment to oppose all forms of discrimination and create an environment where everyone is treated with respect. With this in mind, there are fundamental behaviours which all staff are expected to observe when dealing with any trans colleague:

- Trans staff and those who have undergone or are undergoing transition should be addressed by their chosen name and not as the name by which they were previously known.
- Similarly, trans staff should be addressed by their chosen pronouns, and not the pronouns that would have described their gender as assigned at birth. Whilst it may take time for others to adjust to a colleague's new gender identity, deliberate use of a previous name or pronoun constitutes a form of harassment and by doing so, could breach the Dignity at Work and Conduct Policies.
- All trans staff are free to use the restrooms and facilities belonging to the gender with which they identify.

ASSEMBLY COMMISSION STAFF

Support Available if you are transitioning

11. The first step that should be taken if you are or are planning to transition is to have a conversation with your line manager. Managers will be aware that this conversation can be extremely stressful for you and so sensitivity will be exercised and confidentiality emphasised. However, you should be aware that the Human Resources Office will have to be informed at some point in the process but that the same standards of confidentiality will be employed. Whilst the Assembly Commission will make every effort to support trans staff, this support relies on effective communication between you and your line manager. Thus, in this first instance at least, the onus is on you to notify your line manager of your trans status so that the requisite support can be offered.

12. The purpose of this conversation is to establish the key information surrounding your transition to ensure that you feel supported and encouraged throughout, as well as agree next steps to be taken. The results of this meeting should be recorded in a written Gender Transition Plan which should be signed by you, your line manager, and a representative from the Human Resources Office. This does not represent a binding, unchangeable agreement but a commitment to engage with and support you as far as possible through your transition. Progress against this Gender Transition Plan should be reviewed every three months at least, but also at any significant point during the transition process, or any other time you deem it necessary. This document should be treated as confidential and the original retained by the Human Resources Office, with copies made available to you and your line manager.

13. The Gender Transition Plan should cover the following areas:
 - The name and pronouns by which you wish to be known. Managers should be aware that this need not be the opposite of your gender as assigned at birth; you may wish to identify as non-binary.
 - An approximate timescale for the process. This will necessarily cover the nature of your transition i.e. if you are undergoing a surgical transition, you would need to take medical leave to an extent that staff who are not transitioning surgically would not. Line managers will be aware that there is no typical timescale for transition and it will depend on your specific needs. Where your transition includes a medical element, you should also discuss if there are duties within your current role that should not be undertaken at specific times within the process.

- An explanation of how transitioning interacts with systems such as iTrent and Payroll, and at which point your new identity should be reflected on said systems. You and your line manager should compile a schedule of records that need to be updated and who should be involved in updating them; you can update some directly, such as AssISt, whereas others will require staff in other business areas to update records on your behalf. This stage of the conversation will also identify which documents you need to provide in your acquired gender in order to have said systems updated.
- How and when you wish to communicate your gender reassignment to your work colleagues. This may encompass an organisation-wide Postmaster email from your business area or line manager, or you may wish to send a personal communication. Alternatively, you may wish to pursue a less formal route. The important element of this is that you feel that you have control over how the news of your transition is handled.
- The point at which you will begin using the facilities appropriate to your identified gender or, if non-binary, which facilities you will be using.
- Where relevant, any uniform requirements will be agreed with you.
- The possibility for you to experience harassment or bullying as a result of your trans status and to remind you of the support available if this occurs as well as outlining how a complaint can be made under the terms of the Dignity at Work Policy.

14. Given that this conversation touches on a wide range of areas and Assembly Commission policies, it may be the case that you or your line manager wishes to seek advice from the Human Resources Office at any stage throughout this process.

Identification

15. Trans staff can change their legal name by making a statutory declaration of name change. However, the Assembly Commission recognises that you may not wish to change your name immediately or at all. Alternatively, you may wish to be known by a shortened version of your name or a nickname. If you have indicated that you wish to be known by a chosen name, this choice will be respected.

16. Where you identify with a specific gender identity, whether or not you have had gender confirmation surgery or present as that gender, you will be referred to using the pronoun you have a preference for. This could be 'he', 'she' or 'they'.

17. If you are in possession of a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC), the Assembly Commission recognises it has no right to request it. However, there may be circumstances where the Assembly Commission requires documents in your identified gender for administrative purposes such as updating finance or HR records. Where the Assembly Commission requires identity documentation for administrative purposes it will be mindful of the cost implications of obtaining updated documents for you in your new gender identity, and show flexibility wherever possible.

Practical Support

18. There is no maximum or minimum time that will be granted to staff who are undergoing a medical or surgical gender confirmation process as the process is unique for each person. From a line management perspective, you should be offered the same support as would be offered to staff undergoing any other serious medical procedure.

19. Trans staff undergoing medical and surgical procedures related to transitioning will be absent from work at times. As with any medical intervention, the time required for surgery and recovery will vary and you should follow the advice given by your doctor or consultant.

20. As appointments and absence relating to the physical aspects of transitioning are considered medical treatment, they will be managed in accordance with the Managing Attendance Policy.

21. If you will be absent from work for surgery related to your transition, you are encouraged to discuss this with your line manager so that both of you can plan for your absence.

22. Transitioning can require attendance at appointments which, while not medical, are critical to your sense of gender identity. Such appointments should be covered by annual leave or credit time. Line Managers are encouraged to be as flexible as possible to support attendance at such appointments.

Inappropriate behaviour

23. If you feel you have been subject to harassment or inappropriate behaviour because of your trans identity, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance. Alternatively, the Assembly Commission's Dignity at Work Policy outlines the next steps to take.

Record Keeping

24. The General Data Protection Regulations (UK) states that personal data must be accurate and relevant. To this end, the Assembly Commission will ensure that all documents and public references within its control reflect the identified gender of every member of staff. Where documents have been taken or copied prior to your transition, such as exam certificates collected at the point of recruitment, every effort will be made to update these records with equivalent documents that reflect your true gender identity. It is your responsibility to provide these documents. The Human Resources Office will be responsible for retaining and maintaining these records in accordance with the Retention and Disposal Schedule.
25. During the process of updating records, it may be necessary for the Human Resources Office to engage other business areas to make them aware of your transition.
26. Following transition, your records will refer to you in your new name and gender.
27. Although not exhaustive, the following list provides an indication of where a change of gender and identity details should be made or notified to a business area:
- Usher Services in relation to your security pass.
 - IS Office in relation to your Website contact details.
 - The IS Office in relation to AsslSt contact details, including updated photo; IT systems such as email and telephone directories.
 - The Human Resources Office in relation to your employment information, including Learning and Development.
 - The Finance Office in relation to payroll and pension information.
28. In some instances, it may be necessary to retain original documents relating to your gender as assigned at birth, such as for pension or insurance purposes. However, once you have obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate, these must be replaced with your new details.

Pensions

29. Generally, changing gender identity will not impact on your pension rights as your pension age will be determined by the type of pension scheme you are subscribed to.

30. By the same token, unless there are any changes to your personal circumstances, such as divorce or separation, there should be no changes to death benefits payable to dependants as a result of transition alone.

31. The Finance Office is responsible for informing Civil Service Pensions about any changes to your personal data. Therefore, any changes made to your personal details will be communicated to Pensions Branch securely soon after your notice of transition.

32. For staff born after 5 April 1955, a change of gender will not affect your state pension age. Those staff born earlier than this date should contact HM Revenue and Customs for further advice.

GUIDANCE FOR INWARD SECONDEES, AGENCY WORKERS, AND CONTRACTORS

33. The Assembly Commission is committed to providing a working environment that is supportive and inclusive.

34. To this end, inward secondees, agency workers, and contractors have a right to be treated with equality and dignity, and to carry out their work free from harassment and inappropriate behaviour.

35. Trans inward secondees, agency workers, and contractors have the right to have their trans identity respected. This means:

- Trans inward secondees, agency workers, and contractors have the right to be addressed by their chosen name and not as the name by which they were previously known.
- Trans inward secondees, agency workers, and contractors have the right to be addressed using their chosen pronouns.
- Trans inward secondees, agency workers, and contractors have the right to use bathroom facilities appropriate to the gender identity with which they identify.

36. Where an agency worker or inward secondee feels that they have been treated unfairly or have been the subject of inappropriate behaviour on the grounds of their trans identity, they should in the first instance raise the issue with their Assembly Commission line manager for resolution. However, if they are unhappy with the outcome and wish to raise a formal complaint, they should do so with their employer. The employer will then liaise with the Assembly Commission to resolve the matter.

37. Where a contractor feels that they have been subjected to inappropriate behaviour due to their trans identity, they should raise the matter with their employer. Their employer can then liaise with the relevant contract manager in the Assembly Commission to resolve the matter.

Further Support

38. Staff can find further support by contacting the Assembly Commission’s Welfare Support Service, Inspire Workplaces, or Welfare Services. Additionally, Trade Union Members can access support via the NIPSA LGB&T Group.

1. What is trans?

Trans is an umbrella term which is used to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois. Trans does not have a more prescriptive definition than this i.e. to be recognised as trans, a person does not have to have undergone gender confirmation surgery or present themselves as their chosen gender.

2. Are all trans people gay?

No. Trans people share the same feelings with regards to their sexual orientation and attraction as non-trans people.

3. What is the process for a person who is trans to become their true gender?

For many trans people, the process starts with the person in question choosing to live openly in their true gender and then undertaking social and legal steps that accompany it. For someone seeking gender confirmation surgery, initial psychological analysis is undertaken to determine if the person is experiencing gender dysphoria. If that is found to be the case, under NHS rules, the person must live in their acquired gender for two years before surgery can take place. During this time, the person will undergo a number of treatments in order to change their physical characteristics.

4. Will the person need to change their name?

Trans people will often use a name appropriate to their true gender. Those who identify as gender-fluid may use a name that is not considered gender-specific. This name is used exclusively in all facets of the person's life.

5. How do I refer to this person?

Ask the person in a respectful way. Once a trans person has made known their preferred name, this name should be used in all circumstances, rather than their birth name. If you make a mistake and accidentally refer to the person by their birth name, apologise and move on; do not make a big deal about it, as this will often only make the person feel worse. A person who identifies as a certain gender or none should be referred to using the pronoun they prefer, regardless of their surgical status.

6. Does this person have legal protection in their true gender?

Frequently Asked Questions When Approaching Trans Issues

Annex 1

Yes. Under the Sex Discrimination Gender Reassignment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender reassignment in the provision of goods, facilities and services, as well as employment.

7. Will trans staff be expected to use the toilet facilities associated with their gender as assigned at birth?

No, trans staff should use the toilet facilities that are associated with their acquired gender, along with any of the unisex facilities.

8. Changes to records – what is required?

The member of staff's Assembly Commission ID will need to be replaced reflecting their new name and with an updated photo. Additionally, a new photo will need to be uploaded to the staff contact pages on AsslSt. Records relating to employment, such as those held by the Human Resources and Finance Offices, will need to be amended to ensure they match the member of staff's true gender. If any records cannot be amended to reflect the member of staff's true gender, then the reasoning for this should be made clear to the staff in question as well what steps need to be taken to remedy the situation. As a rule, no records should be changed without the permission of the person in question.

9. Can I tell others about this situation?

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times for staff who have undergone, are undergoing, or are considering undergoing transition. It is up to the staff in question how and when they wish to communicate with their colleagues about their trans status. There will be situations where line managers have to inform the Human Resources Office about the trans status of their staff, but this should, as far as possible, be done with the consent and understanding of the staff involved.



Managing Staff who are Transitioning – Guidance for Managers

Purpose

1. In line with the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Transgender Policy, the purpose of this document is to provide line managers with guidance on issues that need to be considered when managing staff who are transitioning.
2. Additionally, this document provides a pro forma for managers to complete in partnership with transitioning staff in order to produce the Gender Transition Plan detailed in paragraph 12 of the Transgender Policy.

The Process of Transitioning

3. Trans staff will experience their transition in a different way, and the term will mean different things to different people. There is no singular outcome for a person who is undergoing transition; some trans staff will feel that transition is a process which continues throughout their lives.
4. Whilst some trans staff will undergo gender confirmation surgery, this is by no means true of all trans staff. Therefore, as a manager, you should be aware of the potential for transitioning staff to require time off for medical procedures but should not assume it will be required.
5. One of the key aspects of transitioning is trans staff obtaining their Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). This document allows the person to be fully recognised in their acquired gender and to obtain a birth certificate which reflects this. One of the criteria for the receipt of a GRC is that the person must have lived in their acquired gender identity for a period of at least two years and must be able to produce evidence of this. As a manager, it is important that you recognise the role the workplace can play in this. One of the ways in which this evidence can be produced is via work records, for example two years' worth of

payslips in a person's new name. Therefore, carrying out your duties in relation to helping your staff transition in the workplace can have long-term beneficial effects on their wellbeing.

6. From an administrative perspective, there are few documents which cannot be altered to reflect a person's acquired gender identity; a person's name can be changed by Deed Poll, regardless of the gender listed on their birth certificate. Provided that they have medical consultation regarding transitioning, a person's passport can be amended to reflect their acquired gender. Therefore, where official documents are required to update employment records, it can be helpful to have an idea of what steps transitioning staff need to take to provide said documents in their acquired gender. For further advice in relation to this, please contact the Human Resources Office.
7. You should be aware that support for trans staff does not cease once they have started living in their acquired gender identity. As well as the potential for transphobic harassment and bullying, there may be ongoing matters related to their trans status that may need to be managed.

Coming Out

8. Coming out describes the moment at which trans staff tell someone about their gender identity. In the context of the workplace, you should be aware that, as a manager, you may be the first person to whom the person in question has 'come out'.
9. Coming out is an extremely personal process that is different for each person. It can be very stressful; the person in question may be apprehensive about the potential for negative reactions from you or their colleagues. It is your responsibility to treat them with sensitivity and to reassure them that they will be fully supported throughout their transition and afterwards.

Confidentiality

10. It is of the utmost importance that confidentiality relating to a member of staff's transition status is maintained at all times. The question of when and how staff reveal their gender identity to their colleagues is a matter for them. If, at any point, you are required to divulge the member of staff's gender identity status, you should explain why it is necessary, and, ideally, obtain their permission to do so.

11. There will be occasions where revealing that staff are undergoing or planning to transition is unavoidable and necessary independent of their consent. For example, the Finance Office are required to adjust records to reflect a member of staff's acquired gender in order to ensure correct National Insurance contributions are applied. It is also necessary to provide the Human Resources Office with a copy of the Gender Transition Plan which is drawn up between you and your staff. Where divulgence is required, you should make staff in question aware and assure them that their personal information will be treated with discretion and confidentiality.

Gender Transition Plan

12. Where staff have indicated they are planning to transition, line managers should promptly schedule a meeting with their staff member and use the Gender Transition Plan Framework found at Annex 1 to develop a Gender Transition Plan.

13. Using the completed framework, you should then write a Gender Transition Plan covering the points raised during your conversation. Once completed, this document should be signed by you and the staff in question. A copy should be securely retained by both you and the staff, with the original forwarded to the designated contact in the Human Resources Office.

14. Progress against this Gender Transition Plan should be regularly reviewed.

Gender Transition Plan Framework

Issue	Considerations	What needs to be done and by whom	Date of completion
Gender Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The member of staff's new name • Any adjustments to role required • Any adjustments to working environment required • Colleagues who are already aware of your gender identity 		
Changing records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security pass and photograph • Office name plates (if applicable) • AsslSt contact details • Website contact details • IT systems • Human Resources • Payroll/pensions • TUS Membership • Professional bodies 		
Informing colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who should be responsible for informing colleagues? • By what method should colleagues be informed? • Should everyone be informed at the same time or should immediate colleagues be informed first? • Who will notify external colleagues/MLAs - line manager or staff? 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When should this take place? • Overview of procedures should any harassment or inappropriate behaviours be experienced 		
First day in acquired gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will this take place? • What do you anticipate it will involve? • Who will provide moral support? • Are you personally ready and, if not, what might make you ready? • Do you feel your colleagues are ready and, if not, what might help make them ready? 		
Medical treatments and other absences*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling • Consultations • Hormone therapy • Speech therapy • Pre surgery • Surgery • Recovery • Will adjustments need to be made to working pattern or environment in the long term? 		
Data Retention and disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long the Gender Transition Plan will be saved, where will it be stored, and in what format • Who will have access to it/who will have a copy • How long it will be stored for 		

*The purpose of this section is to establish the extent of the absences that might arise from the person's transition and what support will be required. The listed items are examples of what a transitioning person **might** require.

ASSISTING AND SUPPORTING TRANS VISITORS TO THE ASSEMBLY AND OTHER USERS OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

1. All users of Parliament Buildings have a right to be treated with equality and dignity, and to use the building free from harassment and inappropriate behaviour. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the 'Assembly Commission') is committed to equality of opportunity and to creating an environment where everyone is treated with respect. The Assembly Commission will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment on the grounds of gender identity and/or trans identity.
2. With this in mind, trans users of Parliament Buildings can expect to be treated with the following considerations:
 - Trans building users should be addressed by their chosen name.
 - Trans building users should be addressed using their chosen pronouns.
 - Trans building users are free to use bathroom facilities appropriate to the gender identity with which they identify.

Record Keeping for trans visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings

3. Whilst visitor passes are gender neutral and do not contain gender-based honorifics (Mr, Mrs etc.), where other records are held for visitors or other users of Parliament Buildings, for example, a list of names attending an event, these records will reflect the expressed gender identity of the person concerned.
4. Such records will be retained in line with the appropriate Assembly Commission Data Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Complaints

5. If an trans visitor feels that they have been subject to unfair or inappropriate conduct related to their trans status, they should make a complaint under the terms of the Assembly Commission's

Complaints Procedure. Details of this procedure can be found on the website of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

DRAFT

Definitions and terminology relating to the Assembly Commission's Transgender Policy

1. The appropriate language relating to gender and gender identity is ever-evolving and can change quickly.
2. With this in mind, this appendix of terms and definitions relating to gender identity has been developed. The document can be updated to reflect the current language surrounding gender and gender identity.
3. If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this document, please contact either the Human Resources Office or the Equality and Good Relations Unit.

Definitions

Ally	A (typically) straight and/or cis person who supports members of the LGBT community.
Bi	Bi is an umbrella terms used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, queer, and some other non-monosexual and non-monoromantic identities.
Biphobia	The fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people. Biphobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.
Cisgender/Cis	Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.
Coming out	When a person first tells someone/others about their orientation and/or gender identity.
Deadnaming	Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.
Gay	Generally, 'gay' refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality – some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.
Gender	Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.

Genderqueer	Genderqueer typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as 'genderqueer' may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.
Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS)	Also called Sex Reconstruction Surgery (SRS). Refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions and is only one small part of transition. Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries.
Gender dysphoria	Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex as assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.
Gender expression	How a person outwardly expresses their gender, contextualised within societal expectations of gender. A person who does not conform to societal expectation of gender may not necessarily identify as trans.
Gender identity	A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or non-binary, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.
Gender reassignment	Another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo gender reassignment usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender. The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of sex in the areas of employment, training, education, provision of goods, facilities or services, and the disposal and management of premises. The Gender Reassignments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 amended the Sex Discrimination Order to make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender reassignment in employment and training. The Sex Discrimination (Amendment of Legislation) Regulations 2008 extended protections from discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment to the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises. Additionally, under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, public authorities have an obligation to promote equality of opportunity of all, which encompasses matters of gender and trans identity.
Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)	The Gender Recognition Certificate enables transgender people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and you currently have to be over 18 to apply. You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.
Intersex	A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female, or non-binary.
LGBT	The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi and trans.

Non-binary	An umbrella term for people who gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.
Outed	When a lesbian, gay, bi or trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent.
Person with a trans history	Someone who identifies as male or female or a man or woman, but was assigned the opposite sex at birth. This is increasingly used by people to acknowledge a trans past.
Passing	If someone is regarded, at a glance, to be a cisgender man or cisgender woman. This might include physical gender cues such as hair or clothing and/or behaviour which is historically or culturally associated with a particular gender.
Pronoun	Words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation – for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their and ze/zir.
Queer	Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
Questioning	The process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
Sex	Assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are interchanged to mean 'male' and 'female'.
Trans/Transgender	An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois.
Transgender man	A term used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. This may be shortened to trans man, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.
Transgender woman	A term used to describe someone who assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman, or MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.
Transitioning	The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this; a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures.

Transitioning also might involves things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

Transphobia

The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are trans, including denying their gender identity or refusing to accept it. Transphobia may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, trans.

Transsexual

This was used in the past as a more medical term to refer to someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. This term is still used by some although many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

DRAFT

UNRESTRICTED

Submission Number: SMT18809

Paper submitted by: Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive

Subject: Development of a Transgender Policy

Date for discussion: SMT meeting on 28 February 2023

Recommendation

SMT is asked to:

1. Approve the Transgender Policy (relating to Assembly Commission staff) for issue to staff and inclusion in the Staff Handbook;
2. Approve consultation responses for issue to consultees on behalf of SMT and for publication; and
3. Approve external consultation on the outward facing Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings with external groups on whom the guidance may impact and who may have a legitimate interest in the matter.

Preceding Papers/Discussions:	Paper SMG17813 <i>Draft Transgender Policy</i> was considered at the 25 February 2022 SMT meeting.
Timescale:	Routine.
Fol Implications:	Fully disclosable.
Legal Implications:	None.
Financial/Tax Implications:	None.
Staffing Implications:	None.
Equality/Section 75 Implications:	The Transgender Policy will contribute to meeting the Assembly Commission's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in particular the category of gender.
Equality Screening:	The screening form has been completed to reflect consultation with Assembly Commission staff and pre-consultation with representative groups and will be further updated if necessary, following external consultation on the outward facing ' <i>Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings</i> '.

UNRESTRICTED

Submission Number: SMT18809

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA):

Annex 5 contains a completed DPIA form.

Consultation:

Internal and external pre-consultation was completed as part of policy research phase. Formal internal consultation was undertaken in 2021 and further consultation with Trade Union Side and staff in 2022.

Attachments:

Annex 1: Draft Transgender Policy

Annex 2: Consultation comments and draft responses

Annex 3: Draft Guidance for Visitors

Annex 4: Equality Screening Form

Annex 5: DPIA Form

Executive Summary

- The Transgender Policy establishes how the Assembly Commission will comply with the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and ensure that transgender staff and building users are treated with respect and provided with appropriate support.
- Consultation with Assembly Commission staff (including inward secondees and temporary agency workers) was held from 4 to 29 October 2021. As there are currently no known transgender staff within the organisation, views on the draft Policy, from a staff perspective, were sought from a small number of relevant external groups. Following changes to the proposed scope of the Policy, further internal consultation took place at the end of 2022 and no responses were received. A table capturing consultation comments from 2021, alongside draft responses, is included at Annex 2.
- Subject to approval by SMT, the Transgender Policy will be issued to staff and uploaded to the Staff Handbook. Responses to consultation comments (Annex 2) will be issued to consultees on behalf of SMT.
- As previously discussed with SMT, formal external consultation on the outward facing 'Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings' element of the policy will commence with external groups on whom the guidance may impact and who may have a legitimate interest in the matter.

Background

1. The [Gender Action Plan 2019-23](#), was approved by the Assembly Commission in April 2019, and sets out an action to “Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings”. A draft Transgender Policy, which includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); a Glossary of Terms; and separate draft Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings, were considered by SMT on 25 February 2022 and approval was given for formal consultation with Trade Union Side, staff and interested external groups.
2. It was agreed that SMT members would provide the Equality Manager with detailed comments after the February 2022 SMT meeting and that further consideration was required in relation to the proposed scope of the Policy.
3. On 5 October 2022, proposed revisions to the Transgender Policy documents were considered by the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors. Based on proposed changes to the scope of the draft Policy, the decision was taken to enter into a further period of formal consultation with Trade Union Side and staff. This consultation took place from 14 November to 12 December 2022. However, no responses were received and no further changes to the documents are therefore proposed.

Recommendations

4. SMT is asked to:
 - Approve the Transgender Policy (relating to Assembly Commission staff) for issue to staff and inclusion in the Staff Handbook;
 - Approve consultation responses for issue to consultees on behalf of SMT and publication; and
 - Approve formal external consultation on the outward facing *Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings* with external groups on whom the guidance may impact and who may have a legitimate interest in the matter.

Risks

5. Implementation of the Transgender Policy will contribute to meeting the Assembly Commission’s obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in particular the category of gender. It will also contribute to meeting the Assembly Commission’s Equality Scheme.

Corporate Governance

6. This area of work is linked to the Corporate Strategy 2018-23 through the strategic Aim of “*Building excellence and innovation in our services*” and, in particular to the objective of “*Ensuring high standards in equality, governance*”

UNRESTRICTED

Submission Number: SMT18809

and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes”.

Next Steps

7. Subject to approval by SMT, the Transgender Policy will be issued to staff and included in the Staff Handbook; and consultation responses issued. In addition, a targeted and short external consultation will commence on the ‘Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings’ with groups on whom the guidance may impact and who may have a legitimate interest in the matter.

AUTHORS: Paul McIlwaine & Maria Bannon, Equality Unit.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Transgender Policy

Staff Handbook Section (insert)

Policy Statement

1. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the 'Assembly Commission') is committed to equality of opportunity and to creating an environment where everyone is treated with respect, including transgender staff.
2. The Assembly Commission will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment on the grounds of reassigned gender.
3. This Policy establishes how the Assembly Commission will comply with relevant equality legislation and ensure that transgender staff are treated with respect and provided with appropriate support.

Scope of Policy

4. The scope of this Policy includes:
 - Assembly Commission staff; and
 - Inward secondees, agency workers and contractors (*paragraphs 51 to 55 refer*).

Policy Objectives

5. The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Ensure that staff who intend to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment¹ are treated with fairness and are supported in order to create a workplace that is safe and inclusive to all staff.
 - Provide managers with support and guidance to assist staff undergoing gender reassignment.
 - Outline the procedure to be applied whenever staff indicate that they wish to undergo gender reassignment.
 - Provide details of the support that should be given to staff undergoing gender reassignment and explain how this interacts with other Human Resources policies.
 - Address how complaints relating to incidents of transphobic bullying or harassment may be raised.
6. Additional information is also provided in the Transgender Policy Glossary of Terms; the Guidance for Managers; and the Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and Other Users of Parliament Buildings.

Legislative Basis

7. The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976² (as amended) ('the 1976 Order') makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their sex in the areas of employment, training, education, provision of goods, facilities or services, and the disposal and management of premises.
8. This legislation protects individuals from direct discrimination, harassment and victimisation if they are planning to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment.

¹ The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order ('the 1976 Order') 1976 defines "*gender reassignment*" as "*a process which is undertaken under medical supervision for the purpose of reassigning a person's sex by changing physiological or other characteristics of sex, and includes any part of such a process*".

² As amended, inter alia, by: The Gender Reassignment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999; the Sex Discrimination (Amendment of Legislation) Regulations 2008, the Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011; and Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

9. The 1976 Order provides that less favourable treatment on grounds of gender reassignment is a form of discrimination to which the 1976 Order applies.
10. The protections of the 1976 Order relating to discrimination on grounds of gender reassignment extend only to a person who meets one of three conditions:
 - He or she *intends to undergo* gender reassignment.
 - He or she *is undergoing* gender reassignment.
 - He or she *has undergone* gender reassignment.

Definitions of Transgender and Transitioning

Transgender

11. Transgender is a term used to describe a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of that sex.

Transitioning

12. People who have decided that they wish to live permanently in a different gender from the one they were assigned at birth will undergo a process to be recognised as such. This process is referred to as 'transition'.
13. For many transgender people, transitioning does not have an end or a stage by which it is considered finished, but is instead an ongoing process that continues throughout their lives. However, for the purposes of this Policy, staff can be said to have transitioned when they present permanently in the gender to which they identify.

Standards of Behaviour

14. Transgender staff must be treated with fairness and dignity and afforded the rights to which they are entitled under law, free from any form of harassment or inappropriate behaviour.

15. Furthermore, through its Equal Opportunities Policy, the Assembly Commission has a commitment to oppose all forms of discrimination and create an environment where everyone is treated with respect.

16. With this in mind, there are fundamental behaviours which all staff are expected to observe when dealing with any transgender colleague:

- Transgender staff should be addressed by their chosen name and not as the name by which they were previously known.
- Transgender staff should be addressed by their chosen pronouns, and not the pronouns that would have described their sex as assigned at birth.
- Whilst it may take time for others to adjust to a colleague's new gender identity, deliberate use of a previous name or pronoun constitutes a form of harassment and by doing so, could breach the Dignity at Work Policy and Standard of Conduct Policy.
- Transgender staff are free to use the restrooms and facilities belonging to the gender with which they identify from the point at which the individual begins to present permanently in the sex to which they identify.
- If staff feel they have been subject to harassment or inappropriate behaviour because of their gender reassignment, they should speak to their line manager or the Human Resources Office in the first instance.

Available Support for Assembly Commission Staff

Creation of a Gender Transition Plan

17. Staff who are intending to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment can seek support from their line manager and/or the Human Resources Office.

18. The first step that should be taken if you are or are planning to transition is to have a conversation with your line manager. Managers will be aware that this conversation can be difficult for you and so sensitivity will be exercised and confidentiality emphasised and adhered to.

19. The Human Resources Office will have to be informed at some point in the transition process and the same standards of confidentiality will be employed.
20. Whilst the Assembly Commission will make every effort to support transgender staff, this support relies on effective communication between you and your line manager. Thus, in this first instance at least, the onus is on you to notify your line manager of your transgender status so that the requisite support can be offered.
21. The reason for notifying your line manager and the Human Resources Office is to establish the key information surrounding your transition so they can support you, and agree the next steps to be taken.
22. The results of this meeting should be recorded in a written Gender Transition Plan which should be signed by you, your line manager, and a representative from the Human Resources Office.
23. The Gender Transition Plan does not represent a binding unchangeable agreement, but a commitment to engage with, and support you as far as possible through your transition. Progress against this Gender Transition Plan should be reviewed at least every three months and at any significant point during the transition process.
24. The Gender Transition Plan should be treated as confidential and the original retained by the Human Resources Office, with copies made available to you and your line manager.
25. The Gender Transition Plan should cover the following areas:
 - The name and pronouns by which you wish to be known.
 - An approximate timescale for the process. This will reflect the nature of your transition i.e. if you are undergoing a surgical transition, you would need to take medical leave to an extent that staff who are not transitioning

surgically would not. There is no typical timescale for transition and it will depend on your specific needs.

- Where your transition includes a medical element, if there are duties within your current role that should not be undertaken at specific times within the process.
- An explanation of how transitioning interacts with systems such as iTrent, including payroll, and at which point your new identity should be reflected on systems.
- A schedule of records that need to be updated and who should be involved in updating them. You can update some directly, such as AsslSt, whereas others will require staff in other business areas to update records on your behalf.
- Documents you need to provide in your acquired gender in order to have systems updated.
- How and when you wish to communicate your gender reassignment to your work colleagues, through formal or informal means. This will give you control over how the news of your transition is handled.
- The point at which you will begin to present permanently in the gender to which you identify and use the restrooms and facilities appropriate to your gender.
- Where relevant, any uniform requirements.

26. You or your line manager can seek advice from the Human Resources Office at any stage during the development of the Gender Transition Plan or throughout the transition process.

Identification

27. Transgender staff can change their legal name by making a statutory declaration of name change. However, you may not wish to change your name immediately, or at all. Alternatively, you may wish to be known by a shortened version of your name. If you have indicated that you wish to be known by a chosen name, this choice will be respected.

28. When you identify with the gender you are reassigning to, whether or not you have had gender confirmation surgery, you will be referred to using the pronoun you prefer. This could be 'he' or 'she'. Further information on definitions and terminology can be found in the Glossary of Terms.

29. If you are in possession of a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC), the Assembly Commission recognises it has no right to request it. However, there may be circumstances where the Assembly Commission requires documents in your identified gender for administrative purposes such as updating Finance or HR records.

30. Where the Assembly Commission requires identity documentation for administrative purposes, it will be mindful of the cost implications of obtaining updated documents for you in your reassigned gender, and show flexibility wherever possible.

Managing Absence

31. There is no maximum or minimum time that will be granted to staff who are undergoing a medical or surgical gender confirmation process as the process is unique for each person.

32. From a line management perspective, you will be offered the same support as would be offered to staff undergoing any other serious medical procedure.

33. As appointments and absence relating to gender reassignment are considered medical treatment, they will be managed in accordance with the Managing Attendance Policy.

34. If you will be absent from work for surgery related to your gender reassignment, you are encouraged to discuss this with your line manager so that both of you can plan for your absence.

35. Transitioning can require attendance at appointments which, while not medical, are critical to your sense of gender. Such appointments should be covered by annual leave or credit time. Line Managers are encouraged to be as flexible as possible to support attendance at such appointments.

Record Keeping

36. The Data Protection Act 2018 requires that personal data must be accurate and relevant. To this end, the Assembly Commission will ensure that all documents and public references within its control reflect the identified gender of staff.

37. Where documents have been taken or copied prior to transition, such as exam certificates collected at the point of recruitment, every effort will be made to update these records with equivalent documents that reflect the reassigned gender. It is your responsibility to provide these documents.

38. The Human Resources Office will be responsible for retaining and maintaining these records in accordance with the Retention and Disposal Schedule.

39. During the process of updating records, it may be necessary for the Human Resources Office to engage other business areas to make them aware of your transition.

40. Following gender reassignment, your records will refer to you in your new name and gender.

41. Although not exhaustive, the following list provides an indication of who should be notified of your gender reassignment:

- Usher Services in relation to your security pass.

- IS Office in relation to your website contact details, AsslSt contact details, updated photo and IT systems, such as email.
- Building Services in relation to updating internal telephone directories.
- The Human Resources Office in relation to your employment information and Learning and Development.
- The Finance Office in relation to payroll and pension information.

42. In some instances, it may be necessary to retain original documents relating to your sex as assigned at birth, such as for pension or insurance purposes. However, once you have obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate, these must be replaced with your new details.

Pensions

43. Generally reassigning gender will not impact on your pension rights as your pension age will be determined by the type of pension scheme you are subscribed to.

44. Unless there are any changes to your personal circumstances, there should be no changes to death benefits payable to dependants as a result of transition alone.

45. The Assembly Commission's Finance Office is responsible for informing Civil Service Pensions (CSP) about any changes to your personal data. Therefore, you should advise the Finance Office Pensions Team of any changes to your personal details arising from this Policy as soon as possible after your notice of transition. The Pensions Team will notify CSP accordingly.

46. For staff born after 5 April 1955, a change of sex due to gender reassignment will not affect your state pension age. Those staff born earlier than this date should contact HM Revenue and Customs for further advice.

External Sources of Support

47. Staff can find further support by contacting the Welfare Support Service or Inspire Workplaces. Additionally, Trade Union Members can access support via the NIPSA LGB&T Group.

Training

48. All Assembly Commission staff will be provided with training on this Policy and its content.

49. Managers will be provided with specific training on their role in applying this Policy.

50. Front facing staff will be provided with specific training on how this Policy applies in their engagement with building users.

GUIDANCE FOR INWARD SECONDEES, AGENCY WORKERS, AND CONTRACTORS

51. The Assembly Commission is committed to providing a working environment that is supportive and inclusive.

52. To this end, inward secondees, agency workers, and contractors have a right to be treated with equality and dignity, and to carry out their work free from harassment and inappropriate behaviour.

53. Inward secondees, agency workers, and contractors have the right to have their transgender identity respected. This means they have the right to:

- Be addressed by their chosen name and not the name by which they were previously known.
- Be addressed using their chosen pronouns.
- Use restroom facilities appropriate to the gender to which they have reassigned.

54. Where an agency worker or inward secondee feels that they have been treated unfairly or have been the subject of inappropriate behaviour on the grounds of their gender reassignment, they should in the first instance raise the issue with their Assembly Commission line manager for resolution. If they are unhappy with the outcome and wish to raise a formal complaint, they should do so with their employer. Their employer will then liaise with the Assembly Commission to resolve the matter.

55. Where a contractor feels that they have been subjected to inappropriate behaviour due to their gender reassignment, they should raise the matter with their employer. Their employer can then liaise with the relevant contract manager in the Assembly Commission to resolve the matter.

General Information

56. Answers to Frequently Asked Questions and a Glossary of Terms are provided at the end of this Policy.

57. This Policy is effective from 1 March 2023.

Related Policies, Guidance and Forms

58. A number of documents are referenced in this Policy and can be found in the Staff Handbook or in the relevant area on AsslSt.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

a) What is the process for a person who has transitioned?

For many transgender people, the process starts with the person in question choosing to live openly in the gender they wish to reassign to, and then undertaking social and legal steps that accompany it.

For someone seeking gender confirmation surgery, initial psychological analysis is undertaken to determine if the person is experiencing gender dysphoria. If that is found to be the case, under NHS rules, the person must live in their acquired gender for two years before surgery can take place. During this time, the person will undergo a number of treatments in order to change their physical characteristics.

b) Will the person need to change their name?

Transgender people will often use a name appropriate to their reassigned gender. This name is used exclusively in all facets of the person's life.

c) How do I, as a non-transgendered person, refer to my colleague who has transitioned?

Ask the person in a respectful way.

Once a transgender person has made known their preferred name, this name should be used in all circumstances, rather than their birth name. If you make a mistake and accidentally refer to the person by their birth name, apologise.

A person who identifies as a certain gender should be referred to using the pronoun they prefer, regardless of their surgical status.

d) Will transgender staff be expected to use the restroom facilities associated with their sex as assigned at birth?

Transgender staff should use the restroom facilities that are appropriate with their reassigned gender. This will be at the point that the staff member begins to present permanently in the gender to which they identify.

e) Can I tell others about this situation?

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times for staff who have undergone, are undergoing, or are considering undergoing gender reassignment.

It is up to the member of staff in question how and when they wish to communicate with their colleagues about their transgender status.

There will be situations where managers have to inform the Human Resources Office about the transgender status of their staff, but this should, as far as possible, be done with the consent and understanding of the staff involved.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The appropriate language relating to gender is ever-evolving and can change quickly. With this in mind, this Glossary of Terms relating to gender has been developed. The document can be updated to reflect language surrounding gender as it develops.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this document, please contact the Human Resources Office.

Definitions

- Coming out** When a person first tells someone/others about their transgender status.
- Deadnaming** Calling someone by their name given at birth after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with transgender people who have changed their name as part of their transition.
- Gender** Often expressed in terms of male and female, gender may be assumed from the sex assigned at birth but can also be culturally determined. The World Health Organisation³ states that: “Gender is used to describe the characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed, while sex refers to those that are biologically determined.”
- Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS)** Also called Sex Reconstruction Surgery (SRS). Refers to procedures that help people transition to their identified gender. Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries.
- Gender dysphoria** Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex as

³ <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/gender-definitions>

assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender identity A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male or female, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

Gender

reassignment Another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo gender reassignment usually means to undergo a medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender.

The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of sex in the areas of employment, training, education, provision of goods, facilities or services, and the disposal and management of premises.

The Gender Reassignments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 amended the Sex Discrimination Order to make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender reassignment in employment and training.

The Sex Discrimination (Amendment of Legislation) Regulations 2008 extended protections from discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment to the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises.

Gender

Recognition

Certificate (GRC) A Gender Recognition Certificate enables transgender people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all transgender people will apply for a GRC. You do not need a GRC to change your gender identity at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.

Intersex	A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female, or non-binary.
Sex	Assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are interchanged to mean 'male' and 'female'.
Transphobia	The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are transgender, including denying their gender identity or refusing to accept it. Transphobia may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, transgender.
Transsexual	Originally a medical term to refer to someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. This term is still used by some although many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

Assembly Commission Summary Transgender Consultation Report

January 2023

Transgender Policy and Guidance

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the draft Transgender Policy and Guidance?

Number	Summarised Consultee Comments	Assembly Commission Response
1	[We] welcome this draft policy and the opportunity to respond. We recommend the removal of the term 'trans' instead use the word 'transgender' throughout these documents. We would expect that a document that intended to protect and promote the rights of transgender people would wish from the outset to ensure their dignity.	The word 'trans' has been removed from the draft policy and guidance and replaced with the word 'transgender'.
2	Here NI are not experts on the particular needs of trans people, we recommend the Commission seeks the views of Transgender NI, SAIL NI, and the various Trade Union LGBTQ+ networks if they have not already. The policy seems comprehensive and the focus on the rights and confidentiality of trans members of staff is welcome. Specifying using pronouns, defining transphobic bullying and harassment and stating trans people can use the facilities that suit their gender are all good measures to set out clearly.	A pre-consultation exercise was conducted with relevant external groups. Consultation was conducted with Trade Union side and staff. The 'Transgender Policy – Guidance on assisting and supporting trans visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings' element of the policy will be issued to external consultees for an 8-week consultation as this element of the policy impacts on external users of Parliament Buildings.

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Annex 2

Number	Summarised Consultee Comments	Assembly Commission Response
3	<p>“... I'm struck by how important a sensitive and actively supportive workplace is for colleagues who are transitioning. I think that all staff, not only managers, would benefit from training on that”.</p>	<p>Training for all staff will be provided and this is referenced in the Transgender Policy.</p>
4	<p>My concern would be for what would be perceived as securing safe spaces in regards to restrooms and facilities. No time frame is set for the process of transition - so could a male member of staff begin the process of transitioning and the next day be able to access what would be perceived as female toilets?</p> <p>As far as I am aware sex is a protected characteristic and so it would be important to make sure that non-transitioning female staff feel safe as well.</p> <p>It may be useful to set some sort of a timeframe so that people would be aware (always bearing mind the sensitivities around this subject).</p>	<p>A member of staff feeling uncomfortable because someone using the same restroom as them is less obviously male or female than they are does not (as appears to be suggested) constitute direct discrimination against that member of staff, since it is a practice applied equally to male and female restrooms.</p> <p>The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 does not prescribe such a timescale. Essentially, once a person has the protected characteristic of transgender for the purposes of the 1976 Order, then the rights afforded therein apply.</p> <p>The Transgender Policy now states that transgender staff are free to use the restrooms and facilities belonging to the gender with which they identify from the point at which the individual begins to present permanently in the sex to which they identify.</p> <p>Therefore, the determination of this timescale will be a matter for the employee and their line manager.</p>
5	<p>Building services have primary responsibility for the telephone system.</p>	<p>Noted and amended in the Transgender Policy.</p>
6	<p>Use is made of the wording “sex assigned at birth” throughout the policy – I know that this is seen by some as contentious and just wanted to highlight that it may be helpful to recognise this in some way so as to engage as many views/people as possible.</p>	<p>The Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 uses the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’; however, neither of these terms is defined. The term ‘sex’ is used primarily with regards to ‘men’ and ‘women’. The term ‘gender’ is used only in the context of gender re-assignment, and this is when a person is re-assigning their sex. Clearly, the</p>

UNRESTRICTED

Annex 2

Number	Summarised Consultee Comments	Assembly Commission Response
		legislation envisages a difference between the two terms. For example, there are separate discrimination provisions for sex (Articles 3 and 3A) and gender reassignment (Article 4A and 4B). Definitions of 'sex' and 'gender' have been set out the in Glossary of Terms and the World Health Organisation's definition of 'Gender' has been added.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the draft Transgender Policy Glossary of Terms?

Number	Summarised Consultee Comments	Assembly Commission Response
1	While the term 'intersex' appears in the glossary [here] provided, we find no reference to intersex individuals in the actual text of these drafts. This is a great disappointment and we consider it to be an opportunity that, should these documents be ratified as they stand, will be lost.	Noted. The documents have been reviewed and if/where appropriate the term 'intersex' inserted.
2	The glossary of terms includes terms relating to sexual orientation as well as gender identity. This could be confusing as while trans people may also be lesbian gay or bisexual, they may also be heterosexual. The use of 'MTF' and 'FTM' is not common anymore. We would use 'sexual orientation' rather than 'sexuality'.	Noted. The glossary of terms has been updated to reflect your comments.
3	My only concern is that this is titled 'Trans Policy - Glossary of Terms' and all the definitions/terms relate to Gender identity. However, there seems to be a definition of gay & Bi sexual people included in this glossary which in my opinion does not need to be	Noted. These terms have been removed.

UNRESTRICTED

Annex 2

Number	Summarised Consultee Comments	Assembly Commission Response
	included in this glossary of terms as these are sexual identities not gender related.	
4	If it is to be wholly associated with the Assembly's trans policy, I think that for clarity it should omit references to sexual orientation for the reason that the person who first commented on the glossary explains so well. If it is intended to cover a broader spectrum of issues or serve a more general purpose as part of the Assembly's diversity and inclusion work, that should be reflected in the title and setting, and the document should contain the exact point made by the first comment.	Noted. These terms have been removed.

Question 3: Do you have any comments on the draft Transgender Policy Guidance for Managers?

Number	Summarised Consultee Comments	Assembly Commission Response
1	<p>The guidance seems comprehensive; it should be reinforced by training for all staff including managers on creating a trans inclusive workplace. While confidentiality is mentioned, this should be emphasized to ensure no information is shared without the employee's consent.</p> <p>The plan framework does include a lot of actions which may seem daunting to someone speaking to their manager to discuss, this must be done in an affirming way. The review process may be a bit ridged, especially given the waiting times for those who choose to attend the GIC.</p>	<p>Training for all staff will be provided and this is referenced in the Transgender Policy.</p> <p>The review process has been reviewed as per comments made.</p>

Question 4: Do you have comments on the draft Transgender Policy Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings?

Number	Summarised Consultee Comments	Assembly Commission Response
1	While brief this guidance seems to cover the needs of trans visitors and other users. Any public facing staff should also receive training.	Noted.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

TRANSGENDER POLICY – DRAFT GUIDANCE ON ASSISTING AND SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER VISITORS AND OTHER USERS OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

1. All visitors to and users of Parliament Buildings have a right to be treated with equality and dignity, and to be free from harassment and inappropriate behaviour.
2. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the ‘Assembly Commission’) is committed to equality of opportunity and to creating an environment where everyone is treated with respect.
3. The Assembly Commission will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment.
4. Transgender¹ visitors and users of Parliament Buildings can expect to be treated with the following considerations:
 - They will be addressed by their chosen name.
 - They will be addressed using their chosen pronouns.
 - They are free to use restrooms and facilities belonging to the gender with which they identify from the point at which they begin to present permanently in the sex to which they identify.

Record-keeping for Transgender Visitors and Users of Parliament Buildings

5. Visitor passes do not contain gender-based honorifics (e.g. Mr, Mrs etc.).

¹Transgender is a term used to describe a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person’s sex by changing physiological or other attributes of that sex.

6. Where records are held for visitors or users of Parliament Buildings, for example, a list of names attending an event, these records will reflect the name and expressed gender identity of the person concerned.
7. Such records will be retained in line with the appropriate Assembly Commission Data Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Complaints

8. If a transgender visitor feels that they have been subjected to unfair or inappropriate conduct related to their gender reassignment, they may raise their complaint using the Assembly Commission's Complaints Procedure. Details of this procedure can be found on the website of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

DRAFT

Annex 4



Northern Ireland
Assembly

SECTION 75 SCREENING FORM

This link will take you to a full list of the Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties - <http://www.equalityni.org/S75duties>

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.

Section 75 (1) requires the Assembly Commission in carrying out its functions, powers and duties to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to the obligations set out above, the Commission is also required to:

- a) have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different
 - religious belief
 - political opinion; or
 - racial group
- b) meet legislative obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order.

What is a policy?

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) state in their guidance that the term 'policy' is used to denote any strategy, policy (proposed/amended/existing) or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten.

The Commission's Equality Scheme reflects the ECNI's definition of a policy and this should be applied in determining what needs to be screened. The Equality Scheme states:

"In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out, or propose to carry out, our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed / amended / existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g. 'draft', 'pilot', 'high level' or 'sectoral'."

If you are in doubt, please contact the Equality and Good Relations Unit for advice. Equality screening guidance notes are also available on Assist.

Part 1 Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context, and to set out the aims and objectives for the policy being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step-by-step basis.

The ECNI, in their 'model equality screening form', note that public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Policy Details

Name of the policy to be screened/description:

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission **Transgender Policy** (to include Guidance for Managers, Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings and Glossary of Terms).

Is this policy an existing, new or revised policy? (Please append policy to screening form)

New Policy

What is it trying to achieve? (brief outline of intended aims/outcomes of the policy)

The Transgender Policy establishes how the Assembly Commission will comply with relevant equality legislation and ensure that transgender staff and building users are treated with respect and provided with appropriate support.

The aim of the policy is to provide support and advice to transgender staff and building users, to outline guidance for staff when approaching transgender issues, and to provide guidance to managers on how to address the needs of transgender staff.

The policy deals specifically with supporting transgender and transitioning staff in the Assembly and provides a structured approach for managers to support staff through their transition. The policy also provides guidance on the provision of assistance and support for visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings.

Are there any of the Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy/decision? Please explain how.

Under the Section 75 category of 'Men and women generally', the following individuals may be expected to benefit from the implementation of the Transgender Policy:

- Individuals intending to undergo gender reassignment;
- Individuals who are undergoing gender reassignment;
- Individuals who have undergone gender reassignment.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Equality and Good Relations Unit (Human Resources Office)

Directorate responsible for devising and delivering the policy?

Whilst the Corporate Services Directorate is responsible for devising and implementing the policy, practical application of the policy, as necessary, will be by Heads of Business and Managers, with support and guidance from HR staff and the Equality Unit as appropriate.

Was consultation carried out as part of this screening exercise?

Yes

No

Background to the Policy to be screened

Include details of any pre- consultations/consultations which have been conducted and whether the policy has previously been tabled at SMT/ Assembly Commission meetings.

The Gender Action Plan 2019-23, which was approved by the Assembly Commission in April 2019, sets out an action to “Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings”.

A paper on the development of a Transgender Policy was tabled and approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) which allowed policy development to be initiated.

Internal consultation with Trade Union Side and Assembly Commission staff (including inward secondees and temporary agency workers) was held from 4th to 29th October 2021. As we have no known transgender staff, views (from a staff perspective) of a small number of relevant external groups were also sought. Following changes to the proposed scope of the Policy, further internal consultation took place at the end of 2022.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Yes

No

If yes, are they

Financial

Legislative

Other, please specify:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Staff

- Service users
- Other public sector organisations
- Voluntary/community/trade unions
- Other, please specify

Other users of Parliament Buildings such as contractors.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are these policies and who owns them? Please list:

Dignity at Work Policy

Managing Attendance Policy

Conduct and Discipline Policy

Equality Scheme Complaints Policy

Consideration of available data/research

(This means any data or information you currently hold in relation to the policy or have gathered/generated during policy development). Evidence to inform the screening process may take many forms and should help you to decide who the policy might affect the most. It will also help ensure that your screening decision is informed by relevant data.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? For example, is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category and details of evidence/information¹

Religious belief

There is no data recorded for the religious beliefs of transgender people in Northern Ireland or Assembly Commission staff.

Political opinion

¹ At the time of completing equality screening and collecting and generating data, the 2021 census data was not available. Therefore, the 2011 census data was used as a comparator. Similarly, as research on the Equality Scheme, Audit of Inequalities and the Good Relations Action Plan was conducted in 2021, Assembly staff data was based on the most up to date data available at the time.

There is no data recorded for the political opinion of transgender people in Northern Ireland or Assembly staff.

Racial group

There is no data recorded for the racial group of transgender people in Northern Ireland or Assembly Commission staff.

Age

There is no data recorded for the age of transgender people in Northern Ireland or Assembly Commission staff.

Marital status

There is no data recorded for the marital status of transgender people in Northern Ireland or Assembly Commission staff.

Sexual orientation

There is no data recorded for the sexual orientation of transgender people in Northern Ireland or Assembly Commission staff.

Men and women generally

HR data as at 1 May 2022.

Breakdown of Permanent Assembly Commission Staff by Gender.

MALE: 176	53% OF STAFF	FEMALE: 158	47% OF STAFF
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GRADE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1-3	10	5	15
4	13	24	37
5	23	27	50
6	23	37	60
7	42	34	76

8	65	31	96
TOTAL	176	158	334

Quantitative data

The Transgender data outlined below was taken from an **Assembly Commission Section 75 Survey** of Assembly Commission staff and the data was at 31 August 2021. It should be noted that a total of 196 responses were received to the survey representing **60 per cent** of all permanent Assembly Commission staff.

Respondents were asked whether they considered themselves to be transgender. Twenty respondents skipped this question. Of those who answered the question (N = 176), the overwhelming majority (98.9%) said 'no' and two respondents preferred not to say.

TRANSGENDER DATA AS AT 31 AUGUST 2021. (N = 176)

CATEGORY	COUNT	PER CENT (%)
Yes	0	0.0
No	174	98.9
Prefer not to say	2	1.1
Total	176	100.0

Qualitative data

Data arising from the consultation conducted from 4 to 29 October 2021 with Assembly Commission staff (including inward secondees and temporary agency workers) and external consultees indicated issues related to the use of some language and terminology, the importance of staff training and the timeframe for implementation of the policy. Mitigations have been put in place and are outlined in the mitigations section below.

Disability

There is no data recorded for the disability and transgender in Northern Ireland or for Assembly Commission staff.

Dependants

There is no data recorded for the sexual orientation of transgender people in Northern Ireland or Assembly Commission staff.

Current Assessment of Impact

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision? and what is the actual or likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by the policy. **(See appendix 1 for information on levels of impact).**

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

Section 75 category

Religious belief

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts:

Impact Level: None

Political opinion

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts: Click or tap here to enter text.

Impact Level: None

Racial group

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts: Click or tap here to enter text.

Impact Level: None

Age

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts:

Impact Level: None

Marital status

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts: .

Impact Level: None

Sexual orientation

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts: Click or tap here to enter text.

Impact Level: None

Men and women

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts: Consultation responses in relation to the policy were positive with the need for training for staff and Managers highlighted to allow for proper and effective implementation of the policy.

Impact Level: Minor Impact

Disability

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts:

Impact Level: None

Dependants

Needs/experiences/priorities/impacts: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Impact Level: None

If you do not have enough data to tell you about potential or actual impacts, you may need to generate more data to distinguish what groups are potentially affected by your policy.

Part 2 Screening Questions

What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 category

Religious belief

Issues: None

Impact Level: None

Political opinion

Issues: None.

Impact Level: None

Racial group

Issues: As above..

Impact Level: None

Age

Issues: As above.

Impact Level: None

Marital status

Issues: As above.

Impact Level: None

Sexual orientation

Issues: As above.

Impact Level: None

Men and women generally

Issues: As Above

Impact Level: Minor Impact

Disability

Issues: None

Impact Level: None

Dependants

Issues: As Above

Impact Level: None

Are there any actions which could be taken to reduce or mitigate any adverse impact which has been identified or opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the section 75 categories?

Section 75 category

Religious belief

Issue:

Impact Level:None

Political opinion

Issue:

Impact Level:None

Racial group

Issue:

Impact Level:None

Age

Issue:

Impact Level:None

Marital status

Issue:

Impact Level:None

Sexual orientation

Issue:

Impact Level:None

Men and women generally

Issue: Overall it is anticipated that the policy will have a positive impact on promoting equality of opportunity and reducing any possible inequalities experienced by transgender Assembly Commission staff and visitors to Parliament Buildings. As raised by consultees, changes to language and terminology in the policy have been made, training will be scheduled for all staff and when the policy is due to be implemented this will be communicated to all staff and placed on the Assembly's intranet. Guidance for visitors will be made available on the Assembly website.

Impact Level: Minor Impact

Disability

Issue:

Impact Level: None

Dependants

Issue:

Impact Level: None

To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category

Religious belief

Details of policy Impact: This policy is not likely to have any impacts on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Impact Level: None

Political opinion

Details of policy Impact: This policy is not likely to have any impacts on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Impact Level: None

Racial group

Details of policy Impact: This policy is not likely to have any impacts on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
Impact Level:None

Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Section 75 category

Religious belief

If Yes, provide details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

If No, provide reasons: Section 75 (2) is not directly applicable to the Transgender Policy.

Political opinion

If Yes, provide details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

If No, provide reasons: Section 75 (2) is not directly applicable to the Transgender Policy.

Racial group

If Yes, provide details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

If No, provide reasons: Section 75 (2) is not directly applicable to the Transgender Policy.

Consultation

Tell us about who you have talked to about your proposals, either internally or externally and who you have formally or informally consulted, to help you decide if the policy needs further equality investigation?

Pre-consultation: In late 2020, as part of the research phase of policy development, the Equality Unit engaged with the Assembly's Gender Action Plan Implementation Group, Trade Union Side, the ECNI and a number of relevant stakeholder organisations.

Internal consultation with Trade Union Side and Assembly Commission staff (including inward secondees and temporary agency workers) was held from 4th to 29th October 2021. As we have no known transgender staff, views of a small number of relevant external groups were also sought (from a staff perspective). Following changes to the proposed scope of the Policy, further internal consultation took place at the end of 2022.

Disability Duties

Consider whether the policy:

- a) Discourages disabled people from participating in public life and fails to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

N/A

- b) Provides an opportunity to better positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourages their participation in public life.

N/A

Additional considerations

Multiple identities

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men).

Provide details of data of the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

There are no indications that the policy will have greater impact when applied to intersectional groups.

Part 3 Screening decision

Through screening, an assessment is made of the likely impacts; either major, minor or none, of the policy on equality of opportunity and/or good relations for the relevant categories. Completion of screening should lead to one of the following three outcomes: check the appropriate box:

Screened out' i.e. the likely impact is none and no further action is required.

'Screened out' with mitigation i.e. the likely impact is minor and measures will be taken to mitigate the impact or an alternative policy will be proposed.

'Screened in' for an equality impact assessment (EQIA) i.e. the likely impact is major and the policy will now be subject to an EQIA.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Appropriate steps and mitigations have been put in place, advice and support is available, training to ensure staff understand the rationale of the policy and the legal framework is scheduled.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, but the policy has minor equality impacts, please provide details of the reasons for this decision and of any proposed mitigating measures or proposed alternative policy.

The policy and guidance is intended to have a positive impact on reducing inequalities under the section 75 category of 'men and women generally' as relating to transgender individuals.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

Timetabling and prioritising for EQIA

Complete this section only if your business area/directorate plans to conduct two or more EQIAs.

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment:

If the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations

Social need

Effect on people's daily lives

Relevance to a public authority's functions

Rating (1-3)

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide details

Click or tap here to enter text.

Part 4 Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the Commission to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The ECNI recommends that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly for adverse impact. See *ECNI Monitoring Guidance for use by Public Authorities (July 2007) pages 9-10, paragraphs 2.13 – 2.20*

Please detail how you will monitor the effect of the policy?

- We will consider the frequency of conducting future section 75 staff surveys in order to continue to collect information on the transgender profile of Assembly Commission staff.
- We will continue to monitor and report on the Assembly Visitor Survey to SMT and address any issues raised in relation to the policy.
- We will review the numbers of staff attending training related to the policy and review feedback in order to understand the future training needs of Assembly Commission staff in relation to the policy.

- We will review any informal/formal complaints and/or issues raised by Assembly Commission staff or visitors.
- The policy will also be reviewed periodically to monitor impact.

What data is required in the future to ensure effective monitoring of the policy?

Data arising from the actions listed above.

Part 5 Data Protection

If applicable, has legal advice been given due consideration?

Yes

No

N/A

Has due consideration been given to information security in relation to this policy?

Yes

No

Part 6 Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Paul McIlwaine

Position/Job Title: Equality Officer

Date: Tuesday, 20 December 2022

Approved by: Maria Bannon, Equality Manager

The policy lead should sign and date the policy under the 'screened by' heading. It should then be countersigned by an approver. The Approver should be the senior manager responsible for the policy which would normally be Head of Business. In instances where a screening decision concludes that an EQIA is required then the screening form should be countersigned by the Director instead of the Head of Business.

There are of course a range of issues which may fall within the scope of being novel, contentious or politically sensitive and could only be taken forward following consultation with the Assembly Commission. Where policy screening highlights novel, contentious or politically sensitive issues, once approved by the Director, the screening form should be forwarded to the Clerk/Chief Executive for review, prior to proceeding to SMT and the Assembly Commission.

A copy of the completed screening form, related policy and any other relevant associated documentation should be forwarded to the Equality Manager.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO INFORM THE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT TO THE EQUALITY COMMISSION

1. Please provide details of any measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups.

Click or tap here to enter text.

2. In developing this policy/decision were any changes made as a result of equality issues raised during:
 - a) pre-consultation/engagement;
 - b) formal consultation;
 - c) the screening process; and/or
 - d) monitoring/research findings.

If so, please provide a brief summary including how the issue was identified, what changes were made, and what will be the expected outcomes/impacts for those affected.

Click or tap here to enter text.

3. Does this policy/decision include any measure(s) to improve access to services including the provision of information in accessible formats? If so, please provide a short summary.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix 1 Screening Questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, you should consider your answers to the questions above.

In addition, the screening questions above further assist you in assessing your policy and must be completed. Some of these questions require you to assess the level of impact of the proposed policy on “equality of opportunity” and “good relations”. The scale used when assessing this impact is either “None”, “Minor” or “Major”. The following paragraphs set out what each of these terms mean.

If your conclusion is none in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then you may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is ‘screened out’ as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, you should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If your conclusion is major in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If your conclusion is minor in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a ‘major’ impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Annex 5

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

Transgender Policy Screening

Owner: Human Resources Office (Equality & Good Relations)
Author: Karen Martin, Deputy Head of HR
Date: 14 February 2023

1. Data Protection Impact Assessments and Projects

Public authorities are responsible for handling personal data in line with the [Data Protection Principles](#) under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) are a tool which help to identify and reduce privacy risks at early stages of projects, reducing the risk of breaching the Act, of damage to reputation, or any associated costs which might otherwise occur.

Whilst DPIAs are not a legal requirement, they are the most effective way to demonstrate to the Information Commissioner that the Northern Ireland Assembly, as a Data Controller, protects the personal data which it processes, and realises its obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018. We may be required to publish DPIAs, (or summaries of), subject to removal of exempt information.

2. Data Protection Impact Assessment screening questions

The first stage of a DPIA is to decide whether a full DPIA is in fact necessary. The following questions are intended to help you. Answering 'yes' to any of these questions indicates that a DPIA would be a useful exercise.

- Will the project involve the use of personal data?

- Will the project involve the collection of new information about individuals? (Individuals may refer to any of our internal or external stakeholders)

- Is there a change to the nature, scope, context or purposes of our processing?

- Will the project compel individuals to provide personal information?

- Will information about individuals be disclosed to organisations or people who have not previously had routine access to the information?

- Are you using information about individuals for a purpose it is not currently used for, or in a way it is not currently used?

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- Does the project involve you using new technology which might be perceived as being privacy intrusive?

- Will the project result in you making decisions or taking action against individuals in ways which can have a significant impact on them?

- Is the information about individuals of a kind particularly likely to raise privacy concerns or expectations? For example, health records, or other information that people would consider to be particularly private.

- Will the project require you to contact individuals in ways which they may find intrusive?

If you decide not to carry out a DPIA, please document your reasons

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3. Data Protection Impact Assessment template

Once it is established that a DPIA is required, start to fill out the template. This should be considered at the beginning of any major project involving the use of personal data, or if you are making a significant change to an existing process. Integrate the final outcomes back into your project plan. Use this template to record the results of each of the following 7 steps.

Step 1 – Identify the need for DPIA

Explain broadly what the project aims to achieve and what type of processing it involves. You may find it helpful to refer or link to other documents, such as a project proposal. Summarise why you identified the need for a DPIA.

This DPIA relates to the implementation of a Transgender Policy to support Assembly Commission staff and Guidance for Visitors and other users of Parliament Buildings on transgender issues.

The objective of the Transgender Policy is to ensure that staff who intend to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment are treated with fairness and are supported in order to create a workplace that is safe and inclusive.

Implementation of the Policy may require a staff member to disclose information regarding their gender reassignment.

The Guidance for Visitors sets out how transgender visitors and users of Parliament Buildings can expect to be treated

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Step 2 – Describe the processing

Describe the nature of the processing:

How will you collect, use, store and delete data?

What is the source of the data?

Will you be sharing data with anyone?

What types of processing identified as likely high risk are involved?

You might find it useful to refer to a flow diagram or another way of describing data flows.

The nature of information provided by a staff member to their line manager and HR office under the Policy in relation to their gender reassignment may be regarded as sensitive. This information will be used only to provide advice and support to the staff member in the workplace.

It is not proposed that personal information will be collected in relation to transgender visitors to Parliament Buildings. However, a visitor may disclose information under the Policy, should they feel that they have been subject to unfair conduct related to their gender reassignment and raise a complaint using the Assembly Commission's Complaints Procedure.

Information collected under the Policy will be managed as confidential and will not be disclosed or used for any other purpose other than as outlined in the Policy.

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Describe the scope of the processing:

What is the nature of the data and does it include special category or criminal offence data?

How much data will you be collecting and using? How often?

How long will you keep it?

How many individuals are affected?

What geographical area does it cover?

The level of information collected from a staff member under the Policy will be led by the staff member, ie the extent of information they consider necessary to share in order to receive support available to them. Information will be managed as confidential and will not be used for any other purpose other than as outlined in the Policy.

Should a transgender visitor raise a complaint under the Complaints Procedure, they may decide on the nature and level of information they provide as part of this process.

All information will be retained in accordance with relevant sections of the Retention and Disposal Schedule.

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Describe the context of the processing:

What is the nature of your relationship with the individuals?

How much control will they have?

Would they expect you to use their data in this way?

Do they include children or other vulnerable groups?

Are there prior concerns over this type of processing or security flaws?

Is it novel in any way?

What is the current state of technology in this area?

Are there any current issues of public concern that you should factor in? Are you signed up to any approved code of conduct or certification scheme (once any have been approved)?

The nature of the relationship between the Assembly Commission and individuals affected by the Policy and Guidance for Visitors is outlined in the above sections. It is not anticipated that information on children or other vulnerable groups will be relevant or collected.

This is a new Policy. There are no prior concerns or security issues in relation to processing of data has occurred regarding matters covered by the Policy and Guidance for Visitors.

All information collected/processed under the Policy and Guidance for Visitors will be managed as confidential.

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Describe the purposes of the processing:

what do you want to achieve?

What is the intended effect on individuals?

What are the benefits of the processing for you, and more broadly?

The purpose and benefit of the Policy is to provide advice and support to staff who intend to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment.

The Guidance for Visitors sets out how transgender visitors and users of Parliament Buildings can expect to be treated and advises of the complaint mechanism available.

Step 3 – Consultation requirements

Consider how to consult with relevant stakeholders:

Describe when and how you will seek individuals' views – or justify why it's not appropriate to do so.

Who else do you need to involve within your organisation?

Do you need to ask your processors to assist?

Do you plan to consult on information security, or with any particular experts?

Trade Union Side and Assembly Commission staff have been consulted in the development of the Policy and Guidance for Visitors. Relevant external groups have also been consulted.

Pre-consultation has been completed with relevant external groups on the Guidance for Visitors and it is proposed that further external consultation will be carried out.

All information arising from consultation is managed as confidential.

Step 4 – Assess necessity and proportionality

Describe compliance and proportionality measures, in particular:

What is your lawful basis for processing?

Does the processing actually achieve your purpose?

Is there another way to achieve the same outcome?

How will you prevent function creep?

How will you ensure data quality and data minimisation?

What information will you give individuals?

How will you help to support their rights?

What measures do you take to ensure processors comply? How do you safeguard any international transfers (if relevant)? Describe how you will ensure compliance with the Data Protection Principles (see Appendix B for details)

Only information directly relevant and necessary to the implementation of the Policy and Guidance for Visitors will be collected or processed. All information will be managed as confidential and will only be processed for its intended use.

Step 5 – Identify and assess risks

Use the following table to identify any privacy risks to individuals, any compliance risks, and any related risks for the organisation (such as fines for non-compliance with legislation, reputational damage leading to loss of public trust, un-wise use of public funds). **You might also want to record this information with other risks on formal project risk register.**

Annex A is a (not exhaustive) list of possible information/privacy risks that projects may encounter.

Annex B can be used to help identify risks of non-compliance with the GDPR

Describe the source of risk and nature of potential impact on individuals. Include associated compliance and corporate risks as necessary.	Likelihood of harm	Severity of harm	Overall risk
Failure to protect data provided under the Policy and Guidance for Visitors against unauthorised disclosure or processing, resulting in non-compliance with the DPA and GDPR UK.	Remote	Significant	Low

Step 6 – Identify measures to reduce risk

Use the table below to describe the actions you could take to reduce the risks identified, and any future steps necessary to address each risk. Note whether the solution eliminates, reduces, or accepts the risk. It is not always possible to eliminate risks, but the purpose of the DPIA is to reduce the impact to an acceptable level while still allowing a useful project to be implemented. Likely costs and benefits of each option or solution should be evaluated, and consider whether the impact on privacy is proportionate to the aims of the project. **You might also want to record this information with other risks on formal project risk register**

See **Annex C** for examples of different steps which can be taken to reduce privacy risks.

Identify additional measures you could take to reduce or eliminate risk s identified as medium or high risk in step 5				
Risk	Options to reduce or eliminate risk	Effect on risk	Residual risk	Measure approved
N/A		Eliminated, reduced or accepted	Low, medium or high	Yes/No

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Step 7 – Sign off and record outcomes

Use this table to detail list what solutions need to be implemented, and who has approved the privacy risks involved in the project. **You might also want to record this information with other risks on formal project risk register.**

Item	Name/date	Notes
Measures approved by:		Integrate actions back into project plan, with date and responsibility for completion
Residual risks approved by:		If accepting any high risk, consult the ICO before going ahead
DPO advice provided:		DPO should advise on compliance, step 6 measures and whether processing can proceed
Summary of DPO advice:		
DPO advice accepted on overruled by:		If overruled, you must explain your reasons
Comments:		
Consultation responses reviewed by:		If your decision departs from individuals' views, you must explain your reasons
Comments:		

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This DPIA will be kept under review by:		The DPO should also review ongoing compliance with DPIA
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4. Annex A – Example privacy risks:

Risks to individuals

- Personal information becomes inaccurate, kept for too long, out of date, excessive or irrelevant, inappropriately shared or disclosed, or used in unacceptable or unexpected ways.
- Inadequate disclosure controls increase the likelihood of information being shared inappropriately.
- The context in which information is used or disclosed can change over time, leading to it being used for different purposes without people's knowledge.
- New surveillance methods may be an unjustified intrusion on their privacy.
- Measures taken against individuals as a result of collecting information about them might be seen as intrusive.
- The sharing and merging of datasets can allow organisations to collect a much wider set of information than individuals might expect.
- Identifiers might be collected and linked which prevent people from using a service anonymously.
- Vulnerable people may be particularly concerned about the risks of identification or the disclosure of information.
- Collecting information and linking identifiers might mean that an organisation is no longer using information which is safely anonymised.
- Information which is collected and stored unnecessarily, or is not properly managed so that duplicate records are created, presents a greater security risk.
- If a retention period is not established information might be used for longer than necessary.

Corporate risks

- Non-compliance with the GDPR or other legislation can lead to sanctions, fines and reputational damage.
- Problems which are only identified after the project has launched are more likely to require expensive fixes.
- Public distrust about how information is used can damage an organisation's reputation and lead to loss of confidence.

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- The use of biometric information or potentially intrusive tracking technologies may cause increased concern and cause people to avoid engaging with the organisation.
- Integrity/Accuracy of information which is collected and stored unnecessarily, or is not properly managed so that duplicate records are created, is reduced.
- Data losses which damage individuals could lead to claims for compensation.

Compliance risks

- Non-compliance with the DPA and GDPR.
- Non-compliance with the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).
- Non-compliance with sector specific legislation or standards.
- Non-compliance with human rights legislation.

The ICO's [Anonymisation: managing data protection risk code of practice](#) may help identify privacy risks associated with the use of anonymised personal data.

The ICO [Data sharing code of practice](#) may help identify privacy risks associated with sharing personal data with other organisations.

5. Annex B – Linking the DPIA to the Data Protection Principles

Answering these questions during the DPIA process will help you to identify where there is a risk that the project will fail to comply with the GDPR.

Under the GDPR, the data protection principles set out the main responsibilities for organisations.

Article 5 of the GDPR requires that personal data shall be:

a) Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals;

- Have you identified the purpose of the project?
- How will individuals be told about the use of their personal data?
- Do you need to amend your privacy notices?
- [Have you established which conditions for processing apply?](#)
- If you are relying on consent to process personal data, how will this be collected and what will you do if it is withheld or withdrawn?
- In relation to Human Rights Act, will your actions interfere with the right to privacy under Article 8?
- Have you identified the social need and aims of the project?
- Are your actions a proportionate response to the social need?

b) Collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes; further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes shall not be considered to be incompatible with the initial purposes;

- Does your project plan cover all of the purposes for processing personal data?
- Have potential new purposes been identified as the scope of the project expands?

c) Adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed;

- Is the information you are using of good enough quality for the purposes it is used for?
- Which personal data could you not use, without compromising the needs of the project?

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d) Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay;

- If you are procuring new software does it allow you to amend data when necessary?
- How are you ensuring that personal data obtained from individuals or other organisations is accurate?

e) Kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed; personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes subject to implementation of the appropriate technical and organisational measures required by the GDPR in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals;

- What retention periods are suitable for the personal data you will be processing?
- Can the personal data be deleted in accordance with the retention policy/ when there is no longer a purpose to process the personal data?
- Are you procuring software which will allow you to delete information in line with your retention periods?
- Will the systems you are putting in place allow you to respond to subject access requests more easily?
- If the project involves marketing, have you got a procedure for opting out?
- Does the system comply with the right to Data Portability? The right to data portability allows individuals to obtain and reuse their personal data for their own purposes across different services. It allows them to move, copy or transfer personal data easily from one IT environment to another in a safe and secure way, without hindrance to usability. The right to data portability only applies:
 - to personal data an individual has provided to a controller;
 - where the processing is based on the individual's consent or for the performance of a contract; and
 - when processing is carried out by automated means.

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f) Processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures.

- Do new systems provide protection against the security risks you have identified?
- Do you have sufficient control over external/third party provided systems?
- Are your processes or controls that any third-party processors have in place sufficient to ensure appropriate processing/protection of personal information?
- What training and instructions are necessary to ensure that staff know how to operate a new system securely?
- Will the project require you to transfer data outside of the EEA?
- If you will be making transfers, how will you ensure that the data is adequately protected?

Article 5(2) requires that:

“the controller shall be responsible for, and be able to demonstrate, compliance with the principles.”

6. Annex C - Examples of different steps which can be taken to reduce privacy risks.

- Deciding not to collect or store particular types of information.
- Devising retention periods which only keep information for as long as necessary and planning secure destruction of information.
- Implementing appropriate technological security measures.
- Selecting data processors who will provide a greater degree of security and ensuring that agreements are in place to protect the information which is processed on an organisation's behalf.
- Ensuring that staff are properly trained and are aware of potential privacy risks.
- Developing ways to safely anonymise the information when it is possible to do so.
- Producing guidance for staff on how to use new systems and how to share data if appropriate.
- Using systems which allow individuals to access their information more easily and make it simpler to respond to subject access requests
- Taking steps to ensure that individuals are fully aware of how their information is used and can contact the organisation for assistance if necessary.
- Producing data sharing agreements which make clear what information will be shared, how it will be shared and who it will be shared with.

Section 4:

Assembly

Commission papers

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Submission Number: AC1315

Paper Submitted by: Director of Corporate Services

Subject: Gender Action Plan: 2016-18 Closure Report and Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Date for discussion: Commission meeting on: 11 April 2019

Recommendation/Purpose

(a) The Commission is asked to approve the Closure Report on the 2016-18 Gender Action Plan and (b) approve the Continuing Gender Action Plan for 2019-23

Preceding Papers/Discussions: Progress update presented to the Commission on 5 July 2018.

Timescale: Routine

FoI Implications: Fully disclosable

Legal Implications: This paper contributes to meeting our obligations under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

Financial Implications: None

Staffing Implications: None

Equality / Section 75 Implications: Section 75 implications identified at phase 1 of the project and included in the Gender Action Plan 2016-18.

Equality Screening: Equality screening completed and previously tabled.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA): N/A

Consultation: Progress update prepared in consultation with business areas.

Attachments: Gender Action Plan 2016-18 Closure Report and Annexes to the Closure Report:
Annex 1 – Gender Action Plan 2016-18 Final Status
Annex 2 – List of participants in Business in the Community’s Gender Project
Annex 3 – Gender balance of Secretariat Staff Presenting at SMG
Annex 4 – Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Executive Summary

- The [Gender Action Plan](#) sets out actions and measures to promote gender equality within the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat. It is a cross-directorate plan which covers the entire organisation for a two-year period, 2016-18. The action plan also supports the Assembly in complying with its Section 75 duties.
- Progress against targets in the action plan was overseen by the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group, which reported on progress to SMG and the Commission every six months. The Closure Report marks the final update against the 2016-18 plan. To retain alignment with the reporting cycle, the Closure Report covers the period to March 2019.
- The final status of the individual actions up to 31 March 2019 is provided below.

	Status Key	No of actions
	Completed	36
	Not completed	2
	Action Suspended	1
	Total actions	39

- 92% of the actions were achieved during the timeframe covered by the GAP. It was necessary to suspend one action while the Assembly is not carrying out its full range of functions.
- Two actions, which relate to the development of a Transgender Policy, were not completed within the period. It is proposed that these will be carried forward to the Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23, which is attached at Annex 4 to the Closure Report.

Background

1. On 12 June 2013, at the request of the Clerk/Chief Executive, a group of senior staff met to discuss how the Secretariat might examine the existence of any barriers, whether perceived or actual, in relation to gender within the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat and to consider what actions might be necessary.
2. Following this meeting, a Gender Action Plan Steering Group was established to progress phase 1 of the gender action project, which was to:
 - a. examine gender action plan models used by other Parliaments/Assemblies and organisations;
 - b. oversee research to investigate whether there were issues which were having a detrimental effect in terms of gender equality within the

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Submission Number: AC1315

- secretariat and, if necessary, to develop a Gender Action Plan to address such issues; and
- c. to set clear objectives and a methodology for developing a Gender Action Plan, for approval by SMG and Commission.
3. The Gender Action Plan Steering Group produced a findings report, which was approved by the Commission on 10 December 2014.
 4. Phase 2 of the gender project, namely the development of a Gender Action Plan (GAP), was progressed by the Gender Action Working Group.
 5. The aims of the plan were:
 - To develop and implement policies/strategies/actions to remove barriers, actual and perceived, to gender equality within the organisation;
 - To increase women's participation at decision-making level in the Secretariat, particularly at a senior level;
 - To foster a culture of awareness and understanding of gender issues and gender equality within the organisation;
 - To have in place a suite of policies which:
 - are gender-sensitive
 - promote gender equality
 - reflect good practice
 - comply with legislation
 6. An eight-week staff consultation was held from 12 November 2015 to 8 January 2016. The Assembly Commission approved the final action plan for implementation at its meeting of 3 March 2016. The final action plan is available here on AsslSt:
<http://assist/business-areas/equality-and-good-relations-unit/gender-action-plan-2016-18/>
 7. Progress against targets in the action plan was overseen by the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group, which reported on progress to SMG/Commission every six months. The Closure Report marks the final update on the 2016-18 action plan.

Discussion/Recommendations

8. The Gender Action Plan 2016-18 Closure Report and associated Annexes is attached. The Commission may wish to note that the report covers the period up to 31 March 2019 to retain alignment with the established reporting cycle.
9. Of the 39 individual actions included in the plan, 36 were completed within the timeframe covered by the report. The actions achieved covered a range of activities including: participation in the NICS and CO3 (Chief Executive Third Generation) mentoring schemes; participation in Business in the

UNRESTRICTED

Submission Number: AC1315

Community's Gender Project; focusing on the gender balance of Assembly Secretariat staff presenting at SMG and Commission meetings; ensuring opportunities to attend learning and development events are provided to accommodate all work patterns; the development of policies and guidance to support the life balance, health and well-being of staff; and measures to encourage applications for employment from under-represented groups. The Closure Report provides more detail on the impact and outcomes of a number of the completed actions.

10. One action was suspended as it could not be fully implemented while the Assembly is not carrying out its full range of functions. The aim of the action initially was to provide female employees with fellowships/shadowing opportunities through Assembly Community Connect and the Assembly Business Trust. It was superseded by a proposed Assembly Trainers Network (ATN). The ATN project will be taken forward when the political situation is resolved but it is not necessary to carry this action forward to the continuing GAP as there is no specific gender focus in this project. Two actions relating to the development of a Transgender Policy were not completed within the plan's timescale.
11. There were no cost implications associated with the majority of actions as they were delivered within existing resources. The main costs incurred related to participation in mentoring schemes (£2,250) and participation in Business in the Community's Gender Project (£5,000). In addition, an equal pay review is carried out by NISRA every two years at a cost of £2,500.
12. A draft continuation GAP 2019-23 is provided at Annex 4 to the Closure Report. This carries forward the two actions not completed within the GAP 2016-18 timescale and proposes to continue the range of monitoring activity initiated under that plan. Substantive new actions included in the draft action plan relate to joining Stonewall's Diversity Champion's Programme (as agreed by the Commission on 19 December 2018) and participating in a Queen's University, Belfast research project on gender equality in the UK and Germany.
13. Given that the majority of actions were subject to consultation for the previous GAP, it was not considered necessary to consult on the plan for the continuing activities. As with its predecessor, this continuing activities GAP will be a fluid document to which actions may be added. For example, actions could be added to address any gender-related issues that may arise from an Equality and Good Relations survey undertaken in October/November 2018. Progress will continue to be overseen by the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group.
14. The Commission is asked to consider and approve: (a) the Gender Action Plan 2016-18 Closure Report; and (b) the continuing actions in the Gender Action Plan 2019-23.

Risk/Corporate Governance Issues

15. Implementation of the actions identified through the work of the Gender Action Plan Working Group should contribute to compliance with the section 75 duties.

Corporate Governance

16. This area of work is linked to the draft Corporate Strategy through the strategic aim of *'Building excellence and innovation in our services'* and, in particular to the objective of *"Ensuring high standards in equality, governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes"*.
17. Monitoring reports are provided to SMG twice per year with an annual update provided to the Commission. The Commission last received an update on 5 July 2018.
18. With regard to the GAP 2019-23, it is proposed that SMG continues to be provided with six-monthly monitoring reports and that the Commission is updated on an annual basis.

Next Steps /Future Actions

19. Once considered and, if content, agreed by the Commission, the Gender Action Plan 2016-18 Closure Report will be published on AssISt along with the new action plan for 2019-23.

AUTHOR: Kathy O'Hanlon

Gender Action Plan 2016-18

Closure Report

Purpose of the Report

The aim of this report is to review the implementation of the Gender Action Plan 2016-18, which was intended to place a strategic and long-term focus on addressing gender issues within the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat. The plan also supported the Assembly Commission in complying with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Background

The Gender Action Plan 2016-18 (GAP) was approved by the Assembly Commission at its meeting on 3 March 2016 following an eight-week consultation with staff. The plan was a culmination of a process initiated in 2013 to explore gender issues in respect of the Secretariat which had included: the examination of gender action plans of other organisations; an informal guest speaker session to learn about how gender issues are addressed in other organisations; a wide-ranging literature review; and a survey on perceptions of barriers to gender equality amongst Secretariat staff¹.

The aims of the GAP were:

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

¹ Further information on these activities is provided in the [Gender Action Plan 2016-18](#)

- reflect good practice
- comply with legislation

The actions were grouped into three broad themes to cover ongoing and future work:

- Leadership and Development
- Communication and Engagement
- Life Balance/Health and Well-being

An oversight group was responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring implementation of the GAP². The Secretariat Management Group (SMG) and the Assembly Commission were provided with updates on progress on a six-monthly basis throughout the lifetime of the GAP.

The GAP was a 'living document' to which actions could be added or existing actions amended as circumstances required throughout the reporting period. Eight additional actions were identified and added to the plan in October 2017 as a result of findings of the Business in the Community (BITC) Gender Project Audit. A ninth additional action was included in October 2018 relating to the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme. All additions or amendments were made with the agreement of SMG.

Although the GAP was intended to run for three years from 2016-18, this report covers the period up to 31 March 2019 to retain alignment with the established six-monthly reporting cycle.

Performance Against Actions

The GAP 2016-18 is attached at Annex 1 and provides the final status of each of the individual actions; Table 1 overleaf summarises the number of actions completed or otherwise. 92% of individual actions were completed within the period; more detailed information on the achievement of a number of these actions and their related outcomes is set out in the 'Achievements' section of this report.

² <http://assist.assemblyni.gov.uk/business-areas/equality-and-good-relations-unit/gender-action-plan-2016-18/gender-action-plan-implementation-group/>

Table 1: Overall status of actions

	Status Key	No of actions
	Completed	36
	Not completed	2
	Action Suspended	1
	Total actions	39

Two actions – actions 27 and 28 – were not completed within the period. These relate to the development of a Transgender Policy to address managing/supporting staff and visitors to Parliament Buildings; and associated policy training to staff. While a formal policy is not yet in place, the Human Resources Office will, in the meantime, refer to the LGB&T Toolkit developed by NIPSA³ when necessary. An initial workshop on transgender issues, which was open to all staff, took place on 7 February 2019. In addition, following agreement by the Assembly Commission in December 2018, the process of joining Stonewall’s Diversity Champion’s Programme was initiated in January 2019.

One action – action 19 – was suspended. This aimed to utilise existing Assembly Networks to create an Assembly Trainers Network, in order to provide greater capacity for the Assembly to provide information to a wider audience, including hard to reach groups, across Northern Ireland. The Assembly Trainers Network was agreed by SMG in August 2017; however, it was agreed that the network rollout would be put on hold while the Assembly is not carrying out its full range of functions. This action remains suspended at the time of this report.

Achievements

Of the 36 actions completed, the following are of particular note:

- *Participation in Mentoring Schemes*

Actions 1 and 2 aimed to afford opportunities for Commission staff to participate in the NICS Mentoring programme (across all grades) and the CO3 Programme (AG4 and above). Since 2015, nine staff have participated in the NICS Programme and

³ https://nipso.org.uk/attachments/article/149/Ref-A4_0332_4.pdf

fourteen staff participated in the CO3 Programme. Involvement in the Programmes has provided opportunities for staff in the role of mentee, to learn from the experience and knowledge of their mentor. For those involved as mentors, staff developed their mentoring skills which will benefit them in their role within the Assembly, particularly as line managers.

- *BITC – Gender Project*

Action 3 was to join BITC's Gender Project, which aimed to support organisations to increase their gender diversity, shift workplace behaviours and create enabling workspaces for men and women. The Gender Project commenced in October 2015 for a duration of 3 years. Twelve organisations participated – from both the private and public sectors – along with BITC (see Annex 2). The Assembly Commission, represented by the Deputy Head of Human Resources and the Equality Manager, participated fully in all stages of the project.

As part of the Gender Project, the Assembly Commission was subject to an audit (designed by PwC) to measure performance against BITC's CORE⁴ Standard for Equality, covering nine areas: workplace culture; recruitment and selection; monitoring, evaluation and response; policy and strategy; flexibility and life balance initiatives; career paths, training and development; working environment; and company brand and reputation.

The Assembly Commission's audit results were considered amongst the top performing organisations participating in the Gender Project, scoring 86 out of a total "best practice" score of 100. The average score across all of the participants was 69.34. However, potential areas for further improvement were identified and the Gender Action Plan was revised in September 2017 to include additional actions to address these, including measures to encourage employment from under-represented groups and those with caring responsibilities; unconscious bias training; and a focus on increasing awareness of HR policies that promote equality and diversity

⁴ <https://www.bitcni.org.uk/programmes/core-standard-responsible-business/>

Participation in the Gender Project has also provided opportunities to learn from the experience of other participants, supporting important areas such as policy review and development, and learning and development.

- *Decision making and attendance at SMG and Assembly Commission Meetings*

Actions 5 – 8 focused on the process of decision making in the Assembly Secretariat and attendance at SMG and the Assembly Commission meetings. Figures are now routinely retained on the number and gender breakdown of those presenting to SMG and the Assembly Commission and included in end-year reporting. Guidance was revised with a focus on providing greater advice and support for those attending meetings to present papers or deputise for Directors. Directors were encouraged to give greater consideration to those attending and an increased range of officials have presented papers.

The actions included in the GAP in 2016 in relation to SMG and the Assembly Commission were in the context of the senior management team of the Clerk/ Chief Executive and Directors of the Assembly Secretariat having been exclusively male. Following staff departures and appointments, and a reduction in the number of Directors, SMG now has an even gender balance with a female Clerk/Chief Executive and a female Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services.

In addition, the compilation of figures since 2016 demonstrated a gender balance in those attending meetings in addition to the SMG members. The table below includes figures for 2018-19 period up to 7 February 2019 to highlight that there continues to be a strong representation from female members of staff presenting to the SMG.

Table 2: Gender Balance of Presenters at SMG Meetings

Secretariat Management Group Meetings: Gender Balance Among Those Presenting Papers (members of SMG not included)			
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 (as at 7/2/19)
Total number of meetings	11	11	9
Total number of presentations of papers	61	72	62
% female presenters	52.5% (32)	48.6% (35)	66.1% (41)
% male presenters	47.5% (29)	51.4% (37)	33.9% (21)

There are fewer opportunities to present to the Assembly Commission as the majority of papers are led by the relevant member of SMG. Therefore, the change in gender balance in the senior management team significantly impacts on the gender balance of officials attending every Commission meeting. However, figures have been maintained on those officials who attended in addition to SMG to present to the Commission.

Table 3: Gender Balance of Presenters at Assembly Commission Meetings

Assembly Commission Meetings: Gender Balance Among Those Presenting Papers <i>(Those attending every Commission meeting ie SMG members and Head of Corporate Support not included)</i>			
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total number of meetings	5	6	6
Total number of additional presentations	5	7	18
% female presenters	20% (1)	28.6% (2)	61.1% (11)
% male presenters	80% (4)	71.4% (5)	38.9% (7)

The GAP also included an action for provision to be made for Heads of Business (HoBs) to attend SMG at least once a year. While no formal mechanism was introduced, there has been a focus on ensuring HoBs have the opportunity to present at SMG and good progress has been made. The table below demonstrates that the attendance of HoBs to present at SMG is now much more commonplace with HoBs having made over 40 individual appearances at SMG and almost every Head of Business in post having attended an SMG at least once during each year.

Table 4: Attendance at SMG meetings by HoBs

Secretariat Management Group Meetings: Attendance by HoBs during each year			
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total number of meetings	11	11	11
Total number of Heads of Business attending SMG at least once	14	12	12
Total number of HoBs in post for full year (see note below)	15	14	13
Total number of HoB attendances	42	47	51

Note: There are 15 heads of business but one Clerk Assistant has been redeployed since October 2017 and the Head of Communications post was not filled from April 2018 to January 2019.

Although not a specific requirement of the GAP, the number of staff at all grades who attend SMG is also monitored. This is included at Annex 3 for information. Guidance on presenting papers has also been developed for staff and the author is now included on SMG and Commission papers so they are aware of staff responsible for drafting the papers.

- *Learning and Development*

Actions 10 - 13 focused on ensuring that a range of opportunities to attend learning events are provided to staff in order to accommodate all work patterns, and to minimise potential barriers for staff to attend learning events. All of these actions have been fully implemented and are ongoing. A wide range of training events and masterclasses continues to be made available to all staff. Where possible, more than one session is offered to facilitate different work patterns. An increasing number of training courses are now available on-line, enabling staff to complete these at a time suitable to their work pattern. In addition, training materials are made available for staff who have been unable to attend a training event or masterclass.

- *Equal Pay Review*

Action 15 committed the Assembly Commission to conduct an equal pay review every two years. This action is complete and reviews were carried out in 2015 and 2017, with the next review scheduled in late 2019. The statistical analysis of pay data and commentary on any issues arising are considered by SMG, who decide on any appropriate further action as necessary. Conducting an equal pay review every two years will help to identify any gender related statistically significant differences in pay (as determined by NISRA) for consideration and further action as appropriate.

- *Life Balance, Health and Wellbeing*

Actions 21, 22 and 23 related to the development of policies and guidance to support the life balance, health and wellbeing of our staff. These actions were the implementation of a Job Share Register and supporting guidance; development of guidance for managers and staff in relation to caring responsibilities; and implementation of a Job Share Policy. All three actions have been completed.

The Job Share Register has enabled staff to place their name on the Register so that the HR Office can proactively match them with a potential job share partner. While it is difficult to assess accurately the impact of the guidance in relation to caring responsibilities, a number of staff continue to apply for (and have been granted) flexible working for this reason. Following issue of the Job Shadowing Policy, a small number of staff availed of the opportunity to “shadow” in a different part of the business. However, the current situation in which a number of staff are on temporary outward redeployment has impacted on this.

- *Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy*

Action 26 – development of a Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy – was not completed on time. A draft policy was provided to Trade Union Side in 2017 and this was followed by a significant period of consultation. The Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy was approved by SMG in February 2019. The Policy will provide managers and staff with guidance on how matters should be managed within the workplace; and provide information on the external sources of advice and support available to those affected by domestic violence and abuse.

- *Recruitment*

Actions 33 and 34 were intended to encourage applications for employment from under-represented groups and those with caring responsibilities. During the current period when the Assembly is not sitting, recruitment has not occurred. However, both actions are reflected in recruitment policy/procedure and will be encompassed in future recruitment schemes.

Related costs

The majority of actions in the GAP 2016-18 were delivered within Directorates' existing resources and had no significant cost implications for the Assembly Commission. For example, the Assembly Commission already pays the NICS Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) £15 per employee per annum for access to a wide range of courses via an online training facility, which was used to provide refresher training on various HR policies (Action 35) and training on unconscious bias (Action 37).

Details of additional costs related to the GAP 2016-18 are set out below:

- Statistical analysis of pay data is carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on behalf of the Assembly Commission. The approximate cost of this is £2,500 for each equal pay review.
- Staff participating in the NICS Mentoring Programme were provided with online mentoring training at a total cost of £160. Participation in the CO3 Programme is £150 per person – the total cost to the Assembly Commission to date is £2,100.
- Participation in the BITC Gender Project was £5,000 over the three-year period covered by the project.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

The political uncertainty during the period that the Assembly has not been carrying out its full range of functions has only had a minor impact on the ability to realise all of the actions in full, with one action being suspended until the situation is clearer or has been resolved.

Though the majority of actions were completed there is a need to ensure that focus in these areas continues. For example, with the BITC Gender Project now completed the key challenge is to maintain the networks and contacts that have been established, to allow the Commission to continue to benefit from the experience and knowledge of other organisations. There is also a need to ensure that opportunities to participate in mentoring programmes continue to be offered to staff as they arise.

There is a danger that setting a target for the gender representation at SMG and Commission meetings is somewhat arbitrary, given that attendance at SMG or the Commission will be primarily determined by the nature of the business to be discussed and the decisions required. However, it is important not to conclude that the fact that there is now an even gender split in SMG means that the issue of attendance at SMG and the Commission is now irrelevant. Having the opportunity to present on issues within their responsibilities is a good development opportunity for all staff and upcoming leaders in the organisation. While the guidance for SMG and the Commission is currently under review and will focus on this occasion on supporting officials in the drafting of SMG and Commission papers, the guidance will continue to include advice to those attending for the first time.

Next Steps


Much has been achieved in terms of addressing gender issues within the Assembly Secretariat through the implementation of the actions in the GAP 2016-18. To maintain focus and momentum and to build on the achievements to date, a continuation action plan will be put in place for 2019 - 2023 – a draft of the continuation plan is attached at Annex 4. Those actions that were not completed within the timeframe of the 2016-18 plan will be carried forward to the new plan and a small number of additional actions have been included, such as applying for a Diversity NI Charter Mark and participating in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme as agreed by SMG and the Assembly Commission. A new action has also been included to continue work on a gender leadership network.

Gender Action Plan 2016-18 – Final Status Update

Status Key:

 Complete

 Not completed

 Action suspended

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress update
Mentoring and Coaching	1) Seek access to NICS Mentoring Programme aimed at all NIA grades.	Assembly Commission staff are afforded opportunity to participate in the NICS Mentoring Programme. Target uptake five staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Launch October 2015 – programme duration 9 months. Status: Complete
	2) Seek access to CO3 (Chief Executive Office Third Generation) mentoring project.	Assembly Commission staff are afforded opportunity to participate in the CO3 Mentoring Programme. Target uptake of five staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Launch May 2015 – programme duration 12 months. Status: Complete
	3) Join Business in the Community's Gender Project, which supports organisations to increase gender diversity, shift workplace behaviours and create enabling workplaces for men and women.	Full participation in the BiTC Gender Project over its three-year duration, leading to the development of a bespoke action plan as part of a collaborative approach to address unconscious bias and create a truly inclusive workplace.	Lead: Human Resources Office and Equality and Good Relations Unit Timeline: Project commences October 2015, for 3 years. Status: Complete
	4) Commission staff participation in Women in Public Life (WiPL) Programme.	Assembly Commission staff are afforded the opportunity to participate in programme (five places available).	Lead: Politics Plus Timeline: October 15-June 16 Status: Complete

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress update
Gender balance in presenting to SMG and Commission	5) Collect data at SMG and Commission level and produce yearly report on findings.	One year of complete data available at reporting year end detailing gender balancing.	Lead: Commission and Clerk/Chief Executive's Office (CCEO) Timeline: 31 March 2017 Status: Complete
SMG and Commission Deputising Guides	6) Develop briefing guides/procedures for deputising at SMG and Commission to ensure that deputies have a full understanding of how SMG works.	Revised submission guide along with revised templates to be published on AsslSt.	Lead: CCEO Timeline: 1 April 2016 Status: Complete
Tabling of Papers at SMG and Commission	7) Introduce process to enable authors of SMG/Commission papers to present them at meetings.	Revised SMG guidance and communication to include note to Directors on increasing number and range of staff attending and presenting to SMG/Commission	Lead: CCEO Timeline: 1 April 2016 Status: Complete
	8) Make provision for HoBs to attend SMG at least once a year.	Revised SMG guidance and communication to include note to Directors on increasing number and range of staff attending and presenting to SMG/Commission	Lead: CCEO Timeline: 1 April 2016 Status: Complete
Gender Balancing on Groups	9) Develop guidance for HoBs and Directors on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels.	Guidance presented to SMG following liaison with directors and feedback from Gender Action Implementation Group.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit Timeline: December 2016 Status: Complete

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress update
Training	10) Explore opportunities to partner with organisations where the potential uptake of courses is low.	HR Office will continue to liaise with partner organisations as appropriate.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Ongoing Status: Complete
	11) Continue practice of offering, as far as possible, a range of dates/times for learning events and ensure that this is reflected in learning and development written procedures.	Learning and development written procedures reviewed to reflect practice, which will be applied consistently.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Review of procedures by November 2015 – monitor over lifetime of action plan. Status: Complete
	12) Ensure as far as possible that training events are arranged in Northern Ireland	Learning and development written procedures reviewed to reflect practice, which will be applied consistently. 95% of training events will be offered within Northern Ireland.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Review of procedures by November 2015. Status: Complete
	13) Explore option, where possible, of sharing training materials with all Secretariat staff so that staff who are unable to attend training courses can access materials.	Procurement process for learning activities will be developed to include clause consenting to sharing of training materials internally via Moodle (Virtual Learning Environment)	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: March 2016 Status: Complete
	14) Dignity at Work Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy will continue to be kept under review to ensure compliance with legislation and that the interests of all categories, including gender, are addressed.	Policies will be kept under review on an ongoing basis in light of developments in legislation. Policies will be subject to full review by 31 March 2018, if not required before that date.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Ongoing and full review by 31 March 2018 Status: Complete

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress update
Continued focus on equal pay	15) The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay review every two years and address issues arising.	Equal pay reviews will be conducted every two years and gender-related statistically significant differences in pay (as determined by NISRA) will be considered by SMG.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: By December 2015 and 2017 Status: Complete
Implementation of relevant AERC Review Recommendations	16) Bring AERC recommendations to Women in Politics Working Group and advise Gender Action Implementation Group of any potential impact on Secretariat.	Relevant impact from AERC recommendations is planned for and managed within Assembly Secretariat.	Lead: Clerking/Gender Action Implementation Group Timeline: March 2016 Status: Complete

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
<p>Gender Leadership Network</p> <p><i>Action amended in October 18 update to allow for further consideration of models for a Gender Leadership Network.</i></p> <p><i>(Previous Lead: Raise Previous Timeline: March 2017)</i></p>	<p>17) Consider models for a Gender Leadership Network, including model of Assembly Leadership Forum (ALF).</p>	<p>Research paper; identify models of good practice to promote the position of women in the workplace</p>	<p>Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group/RaISe Timeline: Update provided to SMG by December 2018 Status: Complete</p> <p>RaISe paper, 'Supporting Women in the Workplace – Models of Good Practice', completed and presented to SMG and the Commission following consideration by the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group.</p> <p>At the request of SMG, further consideration will be given to leadership models and networks. A meeting was held with senior management in November 18 to discuss options and a possible way forward. An initial meeting with females at AG1-AG4 to discuss future opportunities around networking, leadership and development was held in February 19. A new action to take this work forward has been identified for inclusion in the 2019-22 Gender Action Plan.</p>

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
Awards	18) Explore the area of awards as discussed in the Working Paper from the European Commission’s Network to Promote Women in Decision-Making in Politics and the Economy (copy circulated).	Research paper; identify models of good practice to promote the position of women in the workplace	Lead: RaISe Timeline: March 2017 Status: Complete
Utilise Existing Assembly Networks	19) Explore potential for coaching and mentoring opportunities through Assembly Community Connect and the Business Trust, including potential for gender fellowships, where women from NIA shadow the work of women within the Business Trust/CO3. Members of the Business Trust and ACC could also contribute to a Gender Leadership Network, if created.	Female employees are provided with fellowship/shadowing opportunities through Assembly Community Connect and the Business Trust.	Lead: Engagement with assistance from Human Resources Office Timeline: 2017-18 Status: Action suspended The Assembly Trainers Network (ATN) paper was agreed by SMG on 25 August 2017 and supersedes this action. The ATN project will be rolled out when the political situation is resolved. However, given that there is no gender-specific focus in the ATN project it is not necessary to carry this action forward to the 2019-22 continuing action plan.

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
Transgender – Inclusion in the Workplace	20) To submit a paper to SMG/Commission recommending that the Assembly Commission becomes a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.	<p>If agreed by SMG/Commission, an application will be submitted to join the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.</p> <p>Through participation in this programme, the Assembly Commission would have access to a programme which offers organisations tailored one-to-one support to help build workplaces that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.</p>	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR</p> <p>Timeline: October/November 2018</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 3 – Life Balance/Health and Well-being			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
Job Share Register	21) Implement Job Share register	Job Share register and associated guidance issued to staff enabling them to register interest in job sharing arrangements.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: March 2016 Status: Complete
Caring Responsibilities Guidance	22) Develop caring responsibilities guidance for managers and staff (subject to formal consultation) and include in staff handbook. Guidance should promote holding of meetings between 10am-4pm as far as possible	Caring responsibilities guidance is developed and issued to staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: October 2017 Status: Complete
Job sampling	23) Address job sampling through implementation of Job Shadowing Policy	Job Shadowing Policy is developed and issued to staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Introduced October 2015 and will be kept under review throughout lifetime of plan Status: Complete
Childcare Scheme	24) Consider issues arising from review of childcare scheme	Issues identified and information provided to SMG and Commission as appropriate.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: June 2016 Status: Complete
Gather staff views on life balance	25) Continue to conduct staff surveys and review questions to ensure that gender aspects are included	Continued measurement of staff opinion and survey outcomes published on AsslSt.	Lead: SMG/Internal Communications Group (ICG) Timeline: March 2017 Status: Complete

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Theme 3 – Life Balance/Health and Well-being			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
Domestic violence policy	26) Development of policy for Secretariat staff	Domestic Violence Policy is developed and issued to staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: March 2017 Status: Complete Policy approved by SMG on 26 February 2019 for issue to all staff.
Development of a Transgender Policy	27) Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: March 2018 Status: Overdue To be carried over into 2019 -22 continuing action plan.
Raise awareness around transgender issues	28) Provide training to staff on transgender issues once policy developed.	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission Policy.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: September 2017 Status: Overdue To be carried over into 2019-22 continuing action plan.

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Reporting and Monitoring			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	29) Provide progress update to SMG and the Assembly Commission every six months	Every six months, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMG/Commission, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit Timeline: Every six months from Commission approval of final plan Status: Complete
	30) Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress	As part of annual report to the Equality Commission, provide full update of directorate activity against action plan targets.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit Timeline: 31 August every year Status: Complete
Central administration and co-ordination of work of Gender Action Implementation Group	31) Co-ordinate and oversee the roll-out of implementation of the action plan	Co-ordination of meetings and work of the Implementation Group once established; Support provided to business areas where necessary; Progress of business areas tracked against targets; and written updates to SMG/Commission on progress against specific actions every six months.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit Timeline: Ongoing until 2018 Status: Complete

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Additional Actions Identified Through Business in the Community (BiTC) Gender Project Audit			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
Capture gender information on staff experience of working in the Assembly	32) Monitor future staff survey results on the basis of gender	Evidence will exist which will show staff experience of working in the Assembly, broken down by gender. This evidence will be captured through the bi-annual staff survey.	Lead: RaISe Timeline: Implementation September 2017, ongoing over lifetime of plan Status: Complete
Encourage employment applications from under-represented groups	33) Continue to use welcome statements as part of external recruitment, as appropriate	Increase in the number of applications by under-represented groups where a welcome statement has been used. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Human Resources Office.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Ongoing over lifetime of action plan Status: Complete
Encourage employment applications from those with caring responsibilities	34) Proactively discuss flexible working options with panels as part of the recruitment planning process	Where post has been identified as suitable, an increase in the number of applicants expressing an interest in flexible working. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Human Resources Office.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Implementation September 2017, ongoing over lifetime of plan Status: Complete
Increased awareness of HR policies that promote equality and diversity	35) To increase awareness of HR policies and the links across equality policies through: promotion of relevant policies to staff; learning activities and regular policy reminders; and refresher training at least every two years	Increased awareness of policies will be monitored by Human Resources Office through the evaluation of learning activities.	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: Ongoing over lifetime of action plan Status: Complete
Exchange of information and ideas	36) To use networking to facilitate exchange of information and ideas (eg KESS seminars, subject-specific	Positive impact of networking activities to be monitored by individual business areas.	Lead: All business areas Timeline: Ongoing over lifetime of

Gender Action Plan 2016 -18 – Final Status Update

Additional Actions Identified Through Business in the Community (BiTC) Gender Project Audit			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Progress Update
	working groups and focus groups for policy development)		action plan Status: Complete <i>Development of networking opportunities and activities to feature in 2019 Gender Action Plan</i>
Increased awareness of corporate issues	37) Through publication of articles on AsslSt and interaction with senior managers, to provide information to staff on corporate matters	Increased awareness of staff on the work of SMG to be measured in future staff surveys	Lead: ICG Timeline: December 2017 Status: Complete
Unconscious bias training	38) To provide training to staff on unconscious bias	Improved understanding of unconscious bias will be monitored by Human Resources Office through evaluation of training activity	Lead: Human Resources Office Timeline: March 2018 Status: Complete
Promotion of Women in the Workplace	39) To consider the research papers on models for a Gender Leadership Network and Awards for promoting women in the workplace	Actions agreed to progress issues identified in research papers	Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group Timeline: June 2018 Status: Complete

Participants in the Business in the Community Gender Project

Harbour Commissioners Office

Translink

NI Assembly Commission

Baker McKenzie

PSNI

NI Fire and Rescue Service

Business in the Community

Belfast City Council

Belfast Trust

Citi Group

Gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting at SMG meetings, 2016/17

Assembly grade	Female		Male	
	No.	% within females	No.	% within males
3	10	31	15	52
4	8	25	6	21
5	14	44	2	7
6	0	0	4	14
7	0	0	2	7
All grades	32	100	29	100*

**Figures may not sum due to rounding*

Caution - percentages based on small numbers

Gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting at SMG meetings, 2017/18

Assembly grade	Female		Male	
	No.	% within female presenters	No.	% within male presenters
3	9	25.7	16	43.2
4	18	51.4	10	27.0
5	8	22.9	4	10.8
6	-		6	16.2
7	-		1	2.7
All grades	35	100	37	100

**Figures may not sum due to rounding*

Caution - percentages based on small numbers

Gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting at SMG meetings, 2018/19

Assembly grade	Female		Male	
	No.	% within female presenters	No.	% within male presenters
3	6	11.8	14	51.9
4	22	43.1	8	29.6
5	18	35.3	1	3.7
6	5	9.8	3	11.1
7	-	-	1	3.7
All grades	51	100	27	100

**Figures may not sum due to rounding*

Caution - percentages based on small numbers

DRAFT Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Gender balance in presenting to SMG and Commission	1) Continue to collect data at SMG and Commission level until April 2019 and produce reports on findings. (Figures for Assembly Community Connect to be included on resumption of full business.)	One further year of complete data collected and analysed for 2018-19. The 2016-17 and 2017-18 reports are available on AssISt . Final overview analysis report of all three years of data.	Commission and Clerk/Chief Executive's Office (CCEO)/RaISe	RaISe report for 18-19 to be prepared by July 2019 Final overview analysis report to be prepared by end of Oct 2019.
Gender Balancing on Groups	2) Monitoring of checklist returns on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels. To be completed by HoBs and Directors utilising guidance issued by the Equality Unit	Monitoring data to be collected for two further years: 2018-19 and 2019-20. (Two returns were received for the first reporting period, January 2017 to March 2018). RaISe to analyse three years of data, including any findings in the final analysis report on gender balance in presenting to SMG and Commission.	Equality and Good Relations Unit/RaISe and relevant Directors/HoBs	Final overview analysis of data to be prepared by end of Oct 2020.
Continued focus on equal pay	3) The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay review every two years and address issues arising	Equal pay reviews will be conducted every two years and gender-related statistically significant differences in pay	Human Resources Office	By end 2019

DRAFT Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
		(as determined by NISRA) will be considered by SMG		

DRAFT Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Senior Women's Network	4) Implement Senior Women's Network (AG4 and above) to meet at least twice a year.	To have in place a network that enables issues to be identified, discussed and – if appropriate – solutions proposed or raised at the appropriate platform; and where good practice can be shared and highlighted.	Gender Action Plan Implementation Group	Every six months
Awards	5) Consider third party recognition awards and apply for awards as appropriate.	Application process completed and submission made.	Gender Action Plan Implementation Group	Issue of awards to be considered on resumption of full Assembly business.
	6) Apply for Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark	Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark achieved. Actions identified to progress to Silver Diversity NI Charter Mark within two years		September 2019 By end of 2021
Transgender – Inclusion in the Workplace	7) Participate in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.	Through participation in this programme, the Assembly Commission would have access to a programme which offers organisations tailored one-to-one support to help build workplaces that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.	Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR	<i>Ongoing for lifetime of the plan</i>

DRAFT Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Development of a Transgender Policy	8) Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff	Human Resources Office	March 2020
Raise awareness around transgender issues	9) Provide training to staff on transgender issues once policy developed.	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission Policy	Human Resources Office	March 2020

DRAFT Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Research	10) Participate in QUB PhD Project 'Gender equality in the UK and Germany: HR Management in light of conflicting constitutional logics'	Through participation in the project, the Assembly Commission will have feedback via anonymised employees' insights on gender equality in the organisation and relevant HR policies, which could be used to inform any further actions that may be required.	Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR	TBC

DRAFT Continuing Gender Action Plan 2019-23

Reporting and Monitoring				
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	11) Provide progress update to SMG every six months	Every six months, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMG/, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Every six months, generally March and October of every year
	12) Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress	As part of annual report to the Equality Commission, provide full update of directorate activity against action plan targets.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	31 August each year
Central administration and co-ordination of work of Gender Action Implementation Group	13) Co-ordinate and oversee the roll-out of implementation of the action plan	Co-ordination of meetings and work of the Implementation Group; Support provided to business areas where necessary; Progress of business areas tracked against targets; and written updates to SMG on progress against specific actions every six months.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Ongoing for lifetime of plan

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – Assembly Commission

Submission Number: AC4318

Paper Submitted by: Director of Corporate Services

Subject: Gender Action Plan 2019 – 2023 Closure Report

Date for discussion: Assembly Commission meeting on 21 June 2023

Recommendation/Purpose

The Assembly Commission is asked to note the Gender Action Plan 2019-23 Closure Report.

Preceding Papers/Discussions:	AC3924 - Gender Action Plan: March 2022 Update was considered by the Assembly Commission on 28 June 2022.
Timescale:	Routine.
FoI Implications:	Restricted.
Legal Implications:	This paper contributes to meeting the Assembly Commission's obligations under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.
Financial Implications:	None.
Staffing Implications:	None.
Equality / Section 75 Implications:	Section 75 implications were identified at phase 1 of the project and included in the Gender Action Plan 2019-23.
Equality Screening:	Equality screening completed and previously tabled.
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA):	Not required - no personal data was collated in the production of the draft Closure Report.
Consultation:	The Gender Action Plan Closure Report has been prepared in consultation with relevant business areas.
Attachments:	Annex A – Gender Action Plan 2019-23 Closure Report.

Executive Summary

- The Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2019-2023 set out actions and measures to promote gender equality within the Assembly Commission. The Action Plan also supported the Assembly Commission in complying with its Section 75 duties.
- Progress against targets in the Action Plan was reported to SMT every six months and to the Assembly Commission annually. The Gender Action Plan Closure Report marks the final status against the 2019-23 Plan.
- The final closure status of actions indicates that 93% of GAP actions were achieved.
- The Assembly Commission is asked to note and approve the GAP Closure Report 2019-2023 at Annex A. Following consideration by the Assembly Commission, the Closure Report will be published on AssISt and the Assembly's website.

Background

1. The GAP 2019-23 set out actions and measures to promote gender equality to support the Assembly Commission in complying with its duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
2. The GAP Implementation Group was responsible for monitoring implementation of the GAP and it met regularly throughout the lifespan of the GAP. SMT received progress updates every six-months and the Assembly Commission received progress updates annually.

Discussion

3. The GAP 2019-2023 contained 14 actions in total. Three actions related to the theme of 'Leadership and Development', eight related to the theme of 'Communication and Engagement' and the remaining three actions related to the administration of the Action Plan under the heading of 'Reporting and Monitoring'.
4. The Closure Report provides information on the final closure status of the GAP up to 1 March 2023 and details that 13 of the 14 GAP actions (93%) have been achieved. Progress is underway to complete the final outstanding action.
5. Notable achievements from GAP actions include:
 - An analysis of the gender balance in those presenting papers to SMT and the Assembly Commission resulting in Heads of Business inviting team members involved in working on specific projects/papers to those meetings;

ASSEMBLY RESTRICTED – Assembly Commission

Submission Number: AC4318

- Development of the Menopause Guidance for Staff and Managers; and
 - Development of the Transgender Policy.
6. The Transgender Policy was approved by SMT in February 2023 and has issued to staff. Action 10 of the GAP aimed to provide training to staff on transgender issues, following issue of the Policy. While this action is not complete at the date of the Closure Report, work is underway by the Human Resources Office to identify and provide appropriate training.
7. At its October 2022 meeting, SMT discussed the requirement for a further gender action plan. It was noted that work on the preparation of the Audit of Inequalities had not identified gender issues which would require the preparation of a successor plan. SMT concluded that in light of progress made through the GAP 2019-23, and the preceding GAP 2016-2018, a further gender action plan was not be required at this time. SMT noted that gender issues would continue to be monitored and addressed through other equality plans.

Recommendation

8. The Assembly Commission is asked to note the GAP 2019-23 Closure Report at Annex A.

Risks

9. Implementation of the actions identified through the work of the GAP Working Group contributed to compliance with the section 75 duties.

Corporate Governance

10. This area of work is linked to the Corporate Strategy 2018-23 through the strategic aim of *'Building excellence and innovation in our services'* and, in particular to the objective of *"Ensuring high standards in equality, governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes"*.

Next Steps

11. Following consideration by the Assembly Commission, the GAP Closure Report 2019-2023 will be published on AssISt and the Assembly's website.

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Annex A

Gender Action Plan 2019-2023 Closure Report

Table of contents	Page
Purpose of the Report	2
Background	2
Performance against actions	2
Achievements/Outcomes.....	3
Non-completed action	4
Conclusion	4
Annex A - Gender Action Plan 2019-2023 Final Status Update (March 23)	

Purpose of the Report

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

Background

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

Performance against actions

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

Final Actions Status

Table 1

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

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

Achievements/Outcomes

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

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

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

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

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

8. Gender Action Plan – Monitoring and Reporting

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

Non-completed Action

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

Conclusion

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

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

Gender Action Plan 2019-2023

Final Status Update

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

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Final progress update
Gender balance in presenting to SMT and Assembly Commission	1) Continue to collect data at SMT and Assembly Commission level until April 2019 and produce reports on findings. (Figures for Assembly Community Connect to be included on resumption of full business.)	One further year of complete data collected and analysed for 2018-19. The 2016-17 and 2017-18 reports are available on AsslSt . Final overview analysis report of all three years of data.	Lead: Commission and Clerk/Chief Executive's Office/RaISe Status: Complete

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Final progress update
Gender Balancing on Groups	<p>2) Monitoring of checklist returns on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels.</p> <p>To be completed by HoBs and Directors utilising guidance issued by the Equality Unit</p>	<p>Monitoring data to be collected for two further years: 2018-19 and 2019-20. (Two returns were received for the first reporting period, January 2017 to March 2018).</p> <p>RaISe to analyse three years of data, including any findings in the final analysis report on gender balance in presenting to SMT and Commission.</p>	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit/RaISe and relevant Directors/HoBs</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
Continued focus on equal pay	<p>3) The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay review every two years and address issues arising</p>	<p>Equal pay reviews will be conducted every two years and gender-related statistically significant differences in pay (as determined by NISRA) will be considered by SMT</p>	<p>Lead: Human Resources Office</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Senior Women's Network	<p>4) Implement Senior Women's Network (AG4 and above) to meet at least twice a year.</p>	<p>To have in place a network that enables issues to be identified, discussed and – if appropriate – solutions proposed or raised at the appropriate platform; and where good practice can be shared and highlighted.</p>	<p>Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group.</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Awards	5) Consider third party recognition awards and apply for awards as appropriate.	Application process completed and submission made.	Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group. Status: Complete
	6) Apply for Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark	Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark achieved. Actions identified to progress to Silver Diversity NI Charter Mark within two years	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit/HR. Status: Complete
Menopause Policy <i>Action added October 2019</i>	7) Develop a Menopause Policy to provide support and assistance to staff and managers	Menopause Policy is developed and issued to staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office/Equality and Good Relations Unit Status: Complete
Transgender – Inclusion in the Workplace	8) Participate in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.	Through participation in this programme, the Assembly Commission would have access to a programme which offers organisations tailored one-to-one support to help build workplaces that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR Office. Status: Complete

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Development of a Transgender Policy	9) Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff	Lead: Human Resources Office and Equality Unit. Status: Complete
Raise awareness around transgender issues	10) Provide training to staff on transgender issues once Policy developed.	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission Policy	Lead: Human Resources Office. Status: Not completed The Transgender Policy was approved by SMT on 28 February 2023. The Equality Manager is currently working with the Learning and Development Team to identify and provide training for staff and managers.
Research	11) Participate in QUB PhD Project 'Gender equality in the UK and Germany: HR Management in light of conflicting constitutional logics'	Through participation in the project, the Assembly Commission will have feedback via anonymised employees' insights on gender equality in the organisation and relevant HR policies, which could be used to inform any further actions that may be required.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR Office. Status: Complete

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