

# The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission **Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030**



## Alternative Formats

You can access and read this document on our website:

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/draft-grap-25-30>

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document sets out the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's ("the Assembly Commission") commitment to Good Relations and provides information on its draft Good Relations Action Plan for the 2025 to 2030 period.
- 1.2 The draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 contains a number of actions about how the Assembly Commission will meet its obligations under Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as described in the [Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme](#). The draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 also supports and contributes to the Assembly Commission's [Corporate Strategy 2023-2028](#) and Corporate Plan 2023-2028.
- 1.3 We are currently at phase 3 of consultation process.
- 1.4 As part of this consultation we wish to consult with the public and our section 75 consultees on the actions included in the draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 to obtain your views.

## **2.0 About the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission**

- 2.1 The Assembly Commission finds its statutory basis in Section 40 and Schedule 5 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. As a body corporate, it is responsible for providing the property, services and staff required for the Northern Ireland Assembly's purposes. Membership of the Assembly Commission comprises the Speaker to the Northern Ireland Assembly as Chairperson and five other Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) appointed by the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 2.2 The Assembly Commission employs staff to support its work. The Senior Management Team (SMT) leads and directs the work of Assembly Commission staff and comprises the Clerk / Chief Executive, the Director of Parliamentary Services, the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services.

2.3 The Assembly Commission staff are led by the Clerk / Chief Executive. The role of the Clerk / Chief Executive comprises three important elements.

- Firstly, as Clerk is responsible for the provision of procedural advice to the Speaker and Members of the Assembly.
- Secondly, as Chief Executive is responsible to the Assembly Commission for the management of the administrative support services to the Assembly.
- Thirdly, the Clerk / Chief Executive is the Accounting Officer for the Assembly Commission's budget.

### 3.0 Equality Scheme Commitments

3.1 Under Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('the 1998 Act'), the Assembly Commission has a statutory duty ***'to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group'***.

3.2 The [Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme](#) is both a statement of its arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and a plan for their implementation.

3.3 This draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 sets out how the Assembly Commission proposes to fulfil the Good Relations duty, and its Equality Scheme commitments, in relation to its staff and those who may visit or use Parliament Buildings (either physically or virtually).

### 4.0 What do we mean by Good Relations?

4.1 Section 75 of the 1998 Act requires all public authorities designated for the purposes of the Act, including the Assembly Commission, to comply with two statutory duties. The first duty requires public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have **due regard** to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine 'equality categories'. The

second duty requires that public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland have **regard to the desirability** of promoting good relations between persons of different:

- religious belief;
- political opinion; and
- racial group.

4.2 Section 75 of the 1998 Act does not define ‘good relations’. The Assembly Commission is committed to equality of opportunity and good relations. On 10 December 2009, the Assembly Commission approved its Good Relations commitment and stated:

***“The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is committed to the promotion of good relations between persons of differing religious belief, political opinion or racial group and is committed to challenging sectarianism and racism.”<sup>1</sup>***

This commitment was made in the context of the Assembly Commission further stating that it **will aim to ensure that the entire community can have full and fair access to, and participate in, the operations of the Northern Ireland Assembly.**

## **5.0 Good Relations in the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission**

5.1 When approved, the draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 will be the fifth Good Relations Action Plan which the Assembly Commission will submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) to show how it plans to fulfil the Good Relations duty. Previous Good Relations Action Plans and six-monthly monitoring reports can be accessed online [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> [Assembly Commission Minutes of Proceedings 10 December 2009](#)

5.2 Some measures which have been accomplished so far in relation to the Good Relations duty are as follows:

- ✓ Conducted a Good Relations and Accessibility **Visitor Survey** and utilised findings to help inform the Assembly Commission's work.
- ✓ Completed an **Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)** on the flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings.
- ✓ Held **inclusive events** to mark anniversaries within the 'Decade of Centenaries' as part of the Assembly Commission's 'Perspective on' series.
- ✓ **Increased engagement with minority ethnic communities** through the Assembly Community Connect Programme and increased their participation on the programme.
- ✓ Conducted an **Equality and Good Relations Survey** with Assembly Commission staff which helped to inform our work.
- ✓ Delivered 'Get Involved' **conferences with Minority Ethnic groups**.
- ✓ **Increased access to information in Irish**, through the Assembly Commission's Education Service, by the provision of an **Irish language champion** and delivery of the **Assembly's education programme in Irish**.
- ✓ Held **Speaker's**, and other events, to include external guests and organisations to highlight their work in the wider community and to increase their participation and inclusion in events held at Parliament Buildings.
- ✓ **Improved access opportunities for people** to contribute to policy development and legislative scrutiny processes through the advertisement of committee stage of Bills in each of the main daily newspapers offering opportunities to all sections of the community to submit evidence.
- ✓ **Installed a display of artefacts and images** in Parliament Buildings.
- ✓ **Conducted research** to discover how other legislatures accommodate the language needs of minority ethnic communities on their websites.

## **6.0 How the plan was developed**

- 6.1 The draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 aligns with the Assembly Commission's Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 which integrates Equality and Good Relations actions. The Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 sets out key priorities and objectives the Assembly Commission intends to deliver in carrying out the role of providing support and advice to the Assembly.
- 6.2 In phase-one of developing the draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030, Heads of Business from across the Assembly Commission's Directorates, who are responsible for the delivery of the current Good Relations Action Plan 2022-2025, were asked to complete a number of surveys in relation to the current action plan's operation, implementation and impact. Questions were also included in relation to the identification of new sources of equality and good relations data and/or any lessons learned. This data was analysed and helped to shape the current draft plan.
- 6.3 We completed phase-two of the consultation by seeking internal feedback from staff via the staff Trade Union, NIPSA, and as part of this phase, a survey was issued to members of The Executive Office (TEO) sponsored Race Equality sub-group, who are a representative panel for minority ethnic communities that supports implementation of the TEO Racial Equality Strategy. All responses were analysed and helped to further shape the draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030.
- 6.4 **We now are seeking your views as part of phase 3 of our consultation** on what we propose to do in the Good Relations Action Plan (2025-2030).

## **7.0 How to have your say on our draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030**

- 7.1 The public consultation (phase 3) on our draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030, will take place from **11 November 2024** to **17 February 2025**. The draft Good Relations Actions 2025-2030 are included at Annex 2, and you can complete a consultation questionnaire via the following link:

<https://lk.nia.fyi/GRAP25-30>



7.2 We will also publish the draft Plan on our website, and we will let people know about the consultation by advertising in local newspapers and on social media, and by emailing our equality contacts. We will inform our staff, building users and our Trade Union representatives about the consultation.

7.3 Should you wish to discuss your needs regarding alternative formats, please contact us:

Telephone: 028 9052 1214

Email: [Equality@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:Equality@niassembly.gov.uk)

7.4 We are happy to hold meetings or focus groups to discuss the draft plan if requested.

7.5 At the end of the consultation period, we will review all of the responses we received during the consultation period and consider whether any changes should be made to the draft Action Plan.

7.6 We will summarize and consolidate the consultation comments received, and our responses to those comments, into a table called the 'Consultation comments/responses table' which we will publish on our website.

## **8.0 Reviewing the Plan**

8.1 Progress on implementation of the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 will be monitored on a six-monthly basis and reported to SMT. Six-monthly monitoring progress updates will be published on the Assembly website. As the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 is a 'living' document, opportunities to amend the plan, should this be necessary, will be available during each six-monthly monitoring cycle.

- 8.2 Each year progress made on the implementation of the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 will be included in the [Assembly Commission's Annual Equality Progress Report](#), which will be submitted to the ECNI and published on the Assembly website.
- 8.3 The actions contained within the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 align with the Corporate Strategy. This will ensure that equality and good relations continue to be addressed at a strategic level and are integrated throughout the organisation.

## Annex 1 Overview of Consultation Stages

### Phase 1

<b>Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 Development / Consultation</b>	<b>Consultees</b>	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Draft Action Plan Development: Feedback and identification of emerging issues from the Good Relations Action Plan 2022-2025.	Internal Stakeholders: Policy Leads/ Heads of Business named on the 2022-2025 Good Relations Action Plan	To obtain views on lessons learnt from the previous plan, what worked, what didn't work, barriers to engagement, potential extension of existing actions and identification of new actions.	May 2024 (Policy Development).  Questionnaire completion by Policy Leads.

### Phase 2

<b>Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 Development / Consultation</b>	<b>Consultees</b>	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Action Plan development: Pre-consultation with targeted external section 75 groups/user groups and Assembly Commission staff.	Targeted user groups/section 75 groups.  Assembly Commission staff.	To obtain views from minority ethnic user groups and Assembly Commission staff on any issues or actions for inclusion and reasons for preferred options and preferences.	August 2024

### Phase 3

<b>Good Relations Action Plan 2025- 2030 Development / Consultation</b>	<b>Consultees</b>	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Draft action plan issued for formal public consultation.	General public, Assembly Commission staff, Members, Party Support Staff and building users.	To obtain views from specified groups and individuals on the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030.	14-week consultation period. (11 November 2024 – 17 February 2025).

## Annex 2



# The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission **Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030**

**Aim 1: Staff Training - Our staff will be a motivated, resilient and expert team**

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Promote a learning environment to support staff in their careers				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
1. We will deliver training to all staff to ensure they understand requirements relating to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and how it relates to their role.	We will ensure all staff receive mandatory training on Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.	Staff understand requirements related to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and how it relates to their role.  Training covers the needs and perspectives of minority communities, which may include practical scenarios and case studies.	Every 3 years.	Equality Unit and Learning and Development.
2. Training and support is provided to policy authors in relation to the requirements of equality and good relations policy screening.	Support and advice are provided by the Equality and Good Relations Unit to policy authors on an ongoing basis, as requested.	We will ensure Assembly Commission policies are screened for equality and good relations as per the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme and	Over the lifetime of the action plan.	Equality Unit and Learning and Development.

**Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Promote a learning environment to support staff in their careers**

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
	Guidance and information on policy screening for staff is provided on the Assembly Commission's intranet.	Equality Commission guidance.		
	Quarterly Screening Reports are published on the Assembly website.			
3. Welcome training is provided to the Visitor Experience Team.	We will ensure the Visitor Experience Team receives 'World Host' training.	The Visitor Experience Team will be trained in 'World Host' training which relates to the delivery of excellent customer service.	World Host training to be completed by the Visitor Experience Team in their first year of employment.	Public Engagement.

**Aim 2:** Participation, dialogue and engagement -The public will understand and value the role of the Assembly and be engaged in its work

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objectives:				
1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy 2. Create more opportunities to engage with Committees				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
4. Establish a minority ethnic stakeholder group.	Work with partners to establish an ethnic minority stakeholder group.  Provide support and resources to the stakeholder group.	Ethnic Minority Stakeholder Group Formed.  Evaluation of the effectiveness of the stakeholder group.	2026.	Public Engagement.
5. Hold a Minority Ethnic Parliament as part of a series of citizen parliaments.	To ensure those who identify as being part of a Minority Ethnic Community have an opportunity to have their voices heard.  Provide support and resources to the Minority Ethnic Parliament.	Positive feedback from attendees.  Seek representation from people of different ethnic backgrounds, ages, genders and socio-economic status.	2026.	Public Engagement.



**Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objectives:**

- 1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy**
- 2. Create more opportunities to engage with Committees**

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
6. Create Information Packs for minority ethnic residents, illustrating how the Assembly and Committees work to encourage engagement.	To create an Information Pack for minority ethnic residents, illustrating how the Assembly and Assembly Committees work and how to engage.	An information pack will be co-designed with minority ethnic groups to increase understanding of the work of the Assembly and Assembly Committees and how to participate.	2029. To be carried out in consultation with the Minority Ethnic Stakeholder group.	Public Engagement.

**Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objectives:**

- 1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy**
- 2. Create more opportunities to engage with Committees**

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
7. Host events in support of Good Relations.	We will host events to help build relationships with communities and create effective opportunities for engagement.	Events will be held on an annual basis.	Ongoing over the lifetime of the action plan.	Public Engagement.

**Aim 3:** Accessibility and Communication - The public will understand and value the role of the Assembly and be engaged in its work

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objectives:				
1. Make the work of the Assembly more accessible 2. Develop and implement a strategy for communicating the impact of the Assembly				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
8. Continually improve accessibility of our website and digital offerings.	Establish, with relevant Business areas, which pages on the Assembly website should be made accessible in various languages. E.g. 'How to visit Parliament Buildings', 'How to book a tour', 'How to keep up with Assembly proceedings' etc.	Agree a priority list of website pages with relevant business areas and produce a set of recommendations based on findings, capability and capacity.	June 2025.	Communications Office with relevant business areas.
	Scope out the possibility of automatic text translation of relevant website pages.	Investigate provision of text translation in non-English as part of the ongoing website redevelopment project and produce a report of findings and recommendations.	Scoping requirement 2025, possible delivery dependent on capability offering, January 2027.	
9. Monitor feedback from the visitor experience in Parliament Buildings with a focus on customer service,	The Visitor Survey is mainstreamed across services which interface with the public in order to	A Visitor Survey to be developed and platformed on a mobile device(s) for	2025-2026.	RaISe has responsibility for the analysis of survey responses.

**Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objectives:**

- 1. Make the work of the Assembly more accessible**
- 2. Develop and implement a strategy for communicating the impact of the Assembly**

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
public facilities and accessibility to Assembly business.	collect data to inform access and service provision.	completion by visitors to Parliament Buildings.		Public Engagement forward any issues raised to relevant business area.
10. Develop and implement a strategy for communicating the impact of the Assembly to Northern Ireland society promoting the advantages of community harmony delivered by a functioning representative Assembly.	Northern Ireland Assembly Commission imagery will strive to reflect different ethnic identities. Legislation or committee hearings with particular focus on community relations will be highlighted in social media and promoted to relevant communities.	Outputs will be audited to reflect aims and objectives.	Over the lifetime of the action plan.	Communications Office.

**Aim 4:** Recruitment and workforce monitoring - Our systems and facilities will be modern, secure and efficient

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Deliver the corporate systems review project				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
11. We will continue to review and analyse applicant and employee Equality Monitoring data in relation to the Northern Ireland economically active population.	We will monitor recently added sub categories in our recruitment monitoring against economically active data, to understand the breakdown of job applicants and Assembly Commission staff by community background, ethnic group and country of birth.	In May of each year, report on monitoring data against 2021 Census data.	May each year.	HR Office.
		We will consider actions to address under representations identified.	Over the lifetime of the plan.	

## Monitoring and Reporting

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Ensure decisions are taken at the appropriate level				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
12. Report on progress to the Senior Management Team (SMT) every six months and the Assembly Commission every year.	Ensure that we deliver on the action plan targets.	Following consultation with business areas, six-monthly updates are prepared for SMT and annual updates for the Assembly Commission.	Every six months (June and December each year).	Equality Unit.
	Staff and the public are informed of progress.	Approved six-monthly updates are published on the Assembly website.		
13. A progress report is submitted yearly to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) via the Annual Equality Progress Report.	To inform the ECNI of action plan delivery and progress.	An annual equality progress report is prepared and submitted to the ECNI.	Annually (submission to the ECNI by 31 August each year).	Equality Unit.