

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Good Relations Action Plan 2022-2025 Closure Report



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Annex A Good Relations Action Plan 2022 – 2025: Closure Report

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the implementation of the Good Relations Action Plan (GRAP) 2022-2025, which aimed to have regard to the desirability of **promoting good relations** between persons of different **religious belief, political opinion or racial group** in the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (“the Assembly Commission”).
- 1.2 The Action Plan also supported the Assembly Commission in complying with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Assembly Commission is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 2.2 In accordance with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland guidance, the Action Plan set out how the Assembly Commission aimed to fulfil the Good Relations duty in relation to the functions for which it is responsible.
- 2.3 The Good Relations Action Plan 2022-2025 contained 11 actions. The actions were grouped into four categories.

3. Performance Against Actions

- 3.1 Table 1 below summarises the number of Good Relations actions completed and not completed. Final status and narrative updates for individual actions is provided at Annex 1.

Table 1 – Final status of Good Relations actions

Status Key	Number of Actions	Percentage of Actions
Complete	9	82%
Not Complete	2	18%
Total Actions	11	100%

- 3.2 Eighty-two percent of actions were completed within the GRAP 2022-2025 period. More detailed information on the achievement of a number of these actions, and their related outcomes, are set out in the ‘Achievements’ section of this report.
- 3.3 The actions contained within the GRAP 2022-2025 were grouped into four categories:
- Training and Development
 - Representation
 - Promotion of Good Relations and Dialogue
 - Participation and Engagement
- 3.4 Table 2 below details the outcomes achieved across the four GRAP categories.

Table 2 Outcomes achieved across GRAP categories

Category	Outcomes achieved	Total number of outcomes	Per cent (%) achieved by category
Staff Training	2	2	100%
Representation	1	1	100%
Promotion of Good Relations and Dialogue	2	3	67%
Participation and Engagement	4	5	80%
Total	9 (82%)	11 (100%)	

4. Achievements

- 4.1 In this section we record the main achievements in **promoting good relations** between persons of different **religious belief, political opinion or racial group** in the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly
- 4.2 GRAP Category **Training and Development**. Action 1.1 relates to identifying an e-learning good relations package for staff. A Good Relations e-learning module has been developed for staff as part of section 75 training. Consideration is being given to an appropriate platform on which to host the training.
- 4.3 GRAP Category **Representation**. Action 2.1 relates to analysing recruitment data for minority ethnic applicants and appointees, and the community background of applicants and appointees, against 2021 Census data and taking appropriate action to address any under-representation issues arising.
- 4.3.1 An annual written review of monitoring data against 2021 Census data (or the most recent Census data available) was produced in May of each year over the lifespan of the Good Relations Action Plan by the Assembly Commission's Human Resources Office and presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- 4.3.2 The Assembly Commission's Human Resources Office also analysed equality data and took positive steps, where appropriate, to attract applicants from under-represented groups, for example by including a welcome statement in recruitment advertising.
- 4.3.3 The Assembly Commission's Human Resources Office will continue to monitor the breakdown of applicants and appointees against Census data and will consider/implement appropriate actions to address under-representation, where this is identified.
- 4.4 GRAP Category **Promotion of Good Relations and Dialogue**. Action 3.1

relates to updating the Events tour script to include the artefacts and images in Parliament Buildings. The Events tour now includes the artefacts and images in the exhibition as standard. This has been well received by visitors.

4.5 GRAP Category **Participation and Engagement**. Action 4.5 relates to conducting research to discover how other legislatures accommodate the language needs of minority ethnic communities on their websites.

4.5.1 A research paper to identify how other UK and Irish legislatures accommodate the language needs of minority ethnic communities on their websites was completed by the Assembly's Research and Library Services (RaLSe) and submitted to Equality Unit on 6 March 2024.

4.5.2 Following the research findings, and discussion on language and engagement issues with the Assembly Commission's Communications Office, other legislatures and the Executive Office Racial Equality Sub Group, an action was identified to '*Continually improve accessibility of our website and digital offerings*'. This action is included in the draft GRAP 2025-2030.

5. What remains to be achieved

5.1 Two actions were deemed as 'not complete' as they did not fully meet the performance indicator/target, or the agreed timescale for completion.

5.2 GRAP Category **Promotion of Good Relations and Dialogue**. Action 3.3. related to scoping out, and where appropriate, procuring new technologies to support self-guided tours. This was to enhance the visitor experience, increase the number of visitors and make information more accessible.

5.2.1 However, this action was incomplete due to the need to progress a number of other technical projects in advance of the resumption of normal Assembly business in 2024. Self-guided tour technology was therefore de-prioritised at that time. Simultaneously the Assembly Commission expediated the

development of a dedicated Visitor Experience Team, whose focus is on interacting with visitors, providing public tours, and ensuring a visit to Parliament Buildings is worthwhile and enjoyable. As a result of the establishment of this team there is a priority on providing “in person” tours.

5.3 GRAP Category **Participation and Engagement**. Action 4.4 sought to scope out, and where appropriate, procure new technologies to support visitor feedback on the Assembly website and at Parliament Buildings.

5.3.1 To achieve this a procurement exercise was completed and awarded. However, the company subsequently did not accept the contract and withdrew from the procurement. Presently, alternative methods of conducting visitor feedback are under consideration. This action will be carried forward in the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030.

5.3.2 In the interim period, visitor feedback has been collected through other sources of visitor engagement and this feedback has been considered and actioned where appropriate. Sources of visitor feedback has included:

- Feedback from delivery of the Assembly Explained and Engage Now sessions by the Engagement Team to ethnic minority communities.
- Feedback from Good Relations Events.
- Feedback received directly from customers.
- Feedback from pre-consultation exercises with minority ethnic groups.
- Feedback from minority ethnic groups on policy issues where views have been sought.

6. **Next steps**

6.1 The Good Relations Plan 2025-2030 is currently being developed to ensure that momentum is maintained in the promotion of good relations between

persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group in the work of the Assembly Commission.

6.2 The Assembly Commission will ensure the effective communication of the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030 to all staff and consultees and continue to provide training and guidance for staff in relation to their responsibilities.

6.3 The Assembly Commission will continue to support the good relations aim of supporting the growth of relationships and structures that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.

Good Relations Action Plan 2022 – 2025 Closure Report

Status Key:

Status Key	Number of Actions	Percentage of Actions
Complete	9	82%
Not Complete	2	18%
Total Actions	11	100%

Corporate Strategy Theme – Investing in the development, expertise and well-being of our people

Good Relations Aim (1) Training and Development

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
1.1 Identify an e-learning good relations package for staff.	Staff better understand good relations and its relevance to them in their roles within the Assembly Commission.	Year 2 (March 2024) Identification and implementation of a Good Relations E-Learning programme for staff.	Lead – Learning and Development Team and Equality and Good Relations Unit	Complete A Good Relations e-learning module has been developed by the Equality Unit for staff as part of section 75 training. Consideration is being given to a suitable platform on which to place training.
		Year 3 (November 2024) Staff have been trained in good relations.		
1.2 Ongoing training and support to policy authors in relation to the requirements of equality and good relations policy screening.	Assembly Commission policies are screened for equality and good relations as per the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme and	Over the Lifetime of the plan: Support and advice is provided by Equality and Good Relations Unit to Policy Authors on an ongoing basis.	Lead – Equality and Good Relations Unit Learning and Development Team	Complete Support and advice were provided, as necessary, to policy authors over the lifetime of the plan.

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
	Equality Commission guidance.	Monitoring information is collected by Learning and Development Team in relation to policy screening training.		<p>Screening intranet pages have been updated to include screening training and pages have monitored by the Equality Unit.</p> <p>Quarterly screening reports were issued to the Assembly Commission's section 75 consultation list, which includes the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and were published on the Assembly website.</p>
		Quarterly Screening Reports are shared with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and published on the Assembly website.		

Corporate Strategy – Building excellence and innovation in our services “Ensuring high standards in equality, governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes.”

Good Relations Aim (2) Representation

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
2.1 Analyse recruitment data for minority ethnic applicants and appointees and, community background of applicants and appointees, against 2021 census data and take appropriate action(s) to address any under-representation issues arising e.g. welcoming statement in recruitment advertising etc.	Staffing is reflective of the Northern Ireland working age population in relation to ethnicity and community background i.e. religious belief/political opinion.	Year 1 – 3 In May of each year produce an annual written review of monitoring data against 2021 Census data.	Lead: Human Resources	<p>Complete</p> <p>An annual written review of monitoring data against 2021 Census data (or the most recent Census data available) was produced in May of each year over the lifespan of the Good Relations Action Plan and presented to the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission’s Human Resources Office analysed equality data and took positive steps, where appropriate, to attract applicants from under-represented groups, for example by including a welcome statement in recruitment advertising.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission’s Human Resources Office will continue to monitor the breakdown of applicants and appointees against Census data and will consider/implement appropriate actions to</p>
		Year 1 – 3 Positive steps used where necessary in external recruitment to attract more applicants from minority ethnic communities and from persons of a community background that is under-represented.		

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
				<p>address under-representation, where this is identified.</p>

Corporate Strategy – Building excellence and innovation in our services “Ensuring high standards in equality, governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes.”

Good Relations Aim (3) Promotion of Good Relations and Dialogue

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
3.1 Update the Events tour script to include the artefacts and images in Parliament Buildings.	To enhance the visitor experience.	Year 1 (March 2023) Tour Script updated.	Lead: Events	Complete The Events tour now includes the artefacts and images in the exhibition as standard. This has been well received by visitors.
3.2 Publicise the Assembly ‘Quiet Room’ as a space for visitors and staff with/without faith for prayer and reflection.	The shared space for prayer and reflection for visitors, service users and staff of all faiths, and none, is publicised.	Year 1 (March 2023) Quiet Room is publicised on the Assembly website.	Lead: Head of Building Services	Complete The Assembly Commission’s accreditation by the National Autistic Society requires that the Quiet Room is reserved for the use of people with autism. The Quiet Room is published on the Assembly website. Other arrangements are considered for staff or visitors who require a space for prayer or reflection, however, no requests for a space for prayer or reflection have been received.

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
3.3 Scope out, and where appropriate, procure new technologies to support self-guided tours .	To enhance the visitor experience, increase the number of visitors and make information more accessible.	Year 1 (March 2023) Scope out what is possible in terms of self-guided tour technology.	Lead: Events	Not Complete This action is incomplete due to the need to progress a number of other technical projects in advance of the resumption of normal Assembly business. Self-guided tour technology was de-prioritised at that time. Simultaneously the Assembly Commission expedited the development of a dedicated Visitor Experience Team, whose focus is on interacting with visitors, providing public tours, and ensuring a visit to Parliament Buildings is worthwhile and enjoyable. As a result of the establishment of this team there is a priority on providing “in person” tours.
		Year 2 (March 2024) If appropriate, procure suitable technologies.		Not Complete

Corporate Strategy - Strengthening engagement with the public “Building connections with target groups”

Good Relations Aim (4) Participation and Engagement

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
4.1 Deliver awareness raising and capacity-building seminars specifically for minority ethnic communities .	Increased participation by minority ethnic communities in the work and activities of the Assembly.	Year 1 (March 2023) Host a series of awareness raising and capacity-building seminars.	Lead: Engagement	Complete The Assembly Commission’s Engagement Team continues to build connections with ethnic minority communities, including the delivery of ‘Assembly Explained’ and ‘Engage Now’ awareness sessions. The aim is to move towards establishing a stakeholder group. The Team also held a successful event in the Senate Chamber during Good Relations week.
4.2 Establish an external ethnic minority stakeholder group . Original action amended to: Complete preparatory work to increase our understanding of ethnic minority communities.	Improved targeting of, access to, and participation in, Assembly Commission services and activities by BME communities.	Year 2 (March 2024) Ethnic minority stakeholder group is established. Original indicator and timeline amended to: Year 3 (2025) Preparatory work is conducted and concluded to	Lead: Engagement, Equality and Good Relations Unit and Assembly Committees	Complete The Assembly Commission’s Engagement Team have concluded preparatory scoping work to build relationships, including holding an event to mark Good Relations Week in the Senate Chamber. The team are working towards establishing an ethnic minority stakeholder group.

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
		increase our understanding of ethnic minority communities.		
4.3 Hold a planned series of cultural events with minority ethnic groups.	Raise awareness of Assembly services with minority ethnic communities and also raise the awareness of staff about minority ethnic cultures.	Year 1 – 3 A series of events is held over the lifetime of the plan.	Lead: Engagement and Clerking	<p>Complete</p> <p>Over the lifetime of plan the Assembly Commission’s Engagement Team has taken the opportunity to hold events with minority ethnic groups to celebrate Good Relations Week.</p> <p>In 2022 the Engagement Team hosted a virtual session called ‘Stronger Together’, in order to engage with minority ethnic groups. The event was opened and attended by the Speaker.</p> <p>In 2023 the Speaker hosted a panel discussion with four guest speakers from diverse backgrounds called ‘Together: Embracing Ethnic and Racial Diversity in Our Community’.</p> <p>In 2024 the team welcomed four inspirational women to Parliament Buildings to tell their</p>

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
				personal stories as part of a ' Living Library ' event for MLAs and staff. The theme was a call to action to create a brighter, inclusive future for all; to build a region where every voice matters; and to put a spotlight on the transformative power of working together.
4.4 Scope out, and where appropriate, procure new technologies to support visitor feedback on the Assembly website and at Parliament Buildings.	Improving the visitor experience.	Year 2 (March 2024) Scope out what is possible in terms of technology to support visitor feedback.	Lead: RalSe with support from Equality and Good Relations Unit	Not Complete A procurement exercise was completed and the contract awarded to the successful tenderer. The company subsequently did not accept the contract and withdrew from the procurement. Alternative methods of conducting visitor feedback are under consideration . This action will be carried forward in the Good Relations Action Plan 2025-2030. In the interim period, visitor feedback has been collected through other sources of visitor engagement and this feedback has been considered and actioned where appropriate. Sources of visitor feedback has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from delivery of the Assembly Explained and Engage Now
		Year 3 (March 2025) If appropriate, procure suitable technologies.		

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Lead	Closure Report Update
				<p>sessions by the Engagement Team to ethnic minority communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feedback from Good Relations Events. ▪ Feedback received directly from customers. ▪ Feedback from Good Relations pre-consultation exercises.
<p>4.5 Conduct research to discover how other legislatures accommodate the language needs of minority ethnic communities on their websites.</p>	<p>To gain greater reach and to raise awareness of the services and operations of the Assembly with minority ethnic communities via the Assembly website.</p>	<p>Year 1 (March 2023) Working with RaISe to conduct research to identify how other UK and Irish legislatures accommodate the language needs of minority ethnic communities on their websites and identify solution options.</p>	<p>Lead: RaISe with support from Equality and Good Relations Unit</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>A research paper to identify how other UK and Irish legislatures accommodate the language needs of minority ethnic communities on their websites and identify solution options (NIAR 72-23) completed and submitted to the Assembly Commission's Equality Unit on 6 March 2024. Following discussion on language and engagement with the Assembly Commission's Communications Office, other legislatures and the Executive Office Racial Equality Sub Group, a further action has been identified to '<i>Continually improve accessibility of our website and digital offerings</i>'. This action is included in the draft GRAP 2025-2030.</p>

