



Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2016-2021

Consultation Response Form

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission welcomes your views on the proposed content of the Assembly Commission Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21, which can be downloaded [here](#):

Please return your completed response form by **Friday 10 June 2016**, by email or post, to:

Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk

Post: Equality and Good Relations Unit
Room 26, Parliament Buildings
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Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 9041 8377

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Alternative Formats

If you require this document in an alternative format such as Braille, audio CD/MP3, easy read, computer disc and/or another language, please contact us to discuss your requirements

Consultee details

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In line with the Assembly Commission's commitment to openness and transparency, all responses will be treated as public and may be published on the Assembly website as part of the consultation process.

If you are content for your name, or the name of your organisation, to be published alongside your response, please tick this box:

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If you do not tick this box, your response will be treated as anonymous.

Question 1: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in aim 1, dialogue and consultation (page 16-19 of the Action Plan)?

NICEM notes with approval that the Assembly's Draft Action Plan contains a measure to '[focus] on engagement with disenfranchised groups', which includes provision for informing groups on how to utilise Assembly resources.

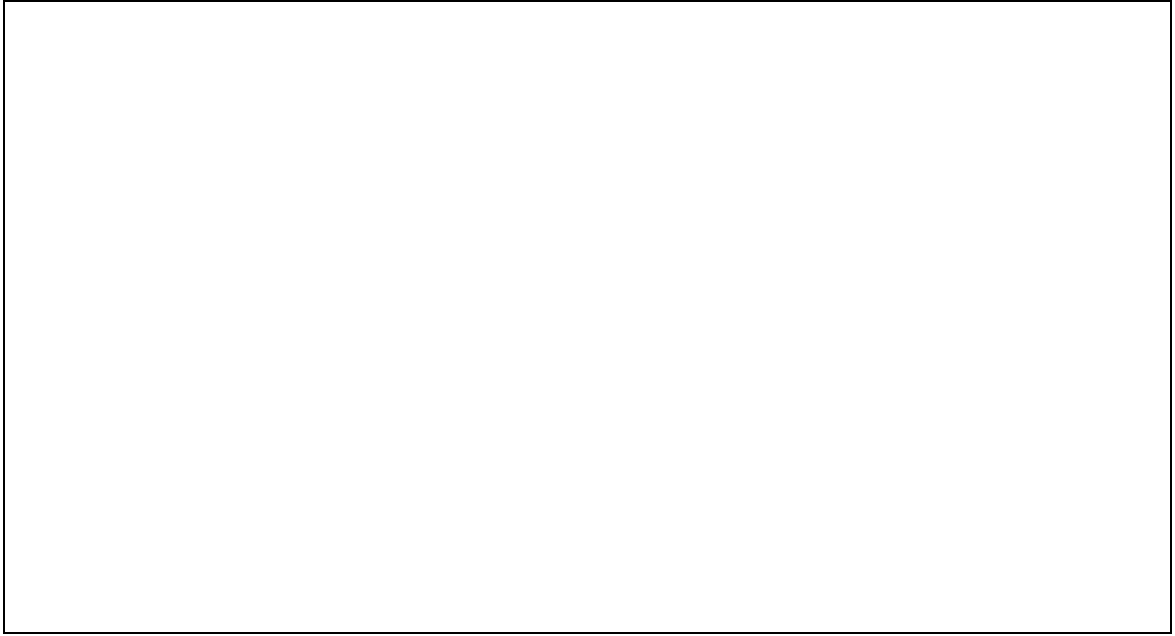
The efficacy of this measure could be improved by including community groups and the All-Party Group for Ethnic Minority Communities as potential conduits for disseminating information to BME communities.

It is also noted that the Draft Action Plan expresses the Assembly's intention to consider new art initiatives, to be reflective of the wider community within Parliament Buildings.

This would be a good opportunity to include artwork from ethnic minority artists, or depicting BME subjects, as a high proportion of those visiting Parliament Buildings are not White British/Irish.¹

Question 2: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in aim 2, promotion of good relations? (Pages 20-21 of the Action Plan)

¹ 16% of visitors between 2009-2010: Northern Ireland Assembly, 'Exhibitions Screening Form' (2013), p.10



Question 3: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in aim 3, equality of service provision (pages 22-26 of the Action Plan)?

It is noted that the current draft action plan aims to inform communities of Committee calls for evidence through daily newspapers. This is a useful mechanism, as not all BME households have access to online notifications. However, newspaper circulation is on a steady decline, thus it is important to use a multi-faceted approach to raise awareness of opportunities to submit evidence.²

One way of ensuring that potential BME respondents are reached would be through disseminating information on calls for evidence through relevant community groups and the APG on Ethnic Minority Communities.

It is further noted that the current plan makes provision for targeting 'disenfranchised groups', with a focus on youth. In this context, it is important to note that there is a low turnout amongst BME persons entitled to vote, with some commenting that politics in NI does not reflect their interests.^{3 4}

Therefore, it would be useful if the plan expanded its provision for targeting disenfranchised groups beyond youth to include BME people who are entitled to vote in NI.

Also under this section, the plan makes commitments on access to information, with initiatives focusing on the Irish language. According to the 2011 Census, approximately 3% of NI's population does not have English as their first language.

² See: <http://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2015/news/sales-drop-at-newspapers-in-northern-ireland/>

³ Rogers, S. and Scullion, G., 'Voices for Change: Mapping the Views of Black and Minority Ethnic People on Integration and Their Sense of Belonging in Northern Ireland' (2014), pp. 15, 25, 31, 35 and 45

In 2014/15, 3.5% of new enrolments were newcomer pupils – pupils who do not have English or Irish as their first language – thus it seems likely that language need will increase over the coming years.

Thus, it would be useful for the Action Plan to include a commitment to provide information on available services in key minority languages, as well as allow for the translation of relevant documentation - such as consultations, the Equality Scheme and the Action Plan itself - upon request.

Question 4: Do you have comments on any of the proposed actions under aim 4, training and development (pages 26-27 of the Action Plan)?

NICEM notes with approval that both new and existing staff will receive good relations training under the terms of the Draft Action Plan. However, the Action Plan could provide more detail on what type of training will be delivered, particularly what training staff will receive on good relations between persons of different racial group.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under aim 5, management information and data (pages 27-28 of the Action Plan)?

Question 6: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under aim 6, monitoring (pages 29 of the Action Plan)?

Question 7: Do you have any other comments on the draft good relations action plan?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this consultation

Consultation Responses and Freedom of Information

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission will usually publish a summary of responses following the completion of the consultation process. If you are content for your name, or the name of your organisation, to be published alongside your response, please inform us at page 2 of the form; otherwise we will publish your response anonymously. Any automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will be taken to apply only to information in your response for which confidentiality has been specifically requested.

If we are asked to disclose responses under freedom of information legislation, we will take any requests for confidentiality into account. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We will handle appropriately any personal data you provide in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office or visit their website at <https://ico.org.uk/>