

British Council Northern Ireland



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2021-22

Contact:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme	Name: Sarah Brisbane Telephone: 02890 192201 Email: sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above X Name: Sarah Brisbane Telephone: 02890 192201 Email: sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<http://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/equal-opportunities-diversity>

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brisbane". The signature is enclosed in a rectangular box.

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2021-22, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

British Council Northern Ireland Work

The British Council continues to build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through work across our three pillars of arts and culture, education and the English language.

We work in two ways – directly with individuals to transform their lives, and with governments and partners to make a bigger difference for the longer term, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We connect the best of the UK with the world and the best of the world with the UK. These connections lead to an understanding of each other's strengths and of the challenges and values that we share. This builds trust between people in the UK and other nations which endures even when official relations may be strained.

We work on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2021-22 we connected with 80 million people directly and with 791 million overall, including online and through our broadcasts and publications.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the British Council's international operations in 2021-22 with loss of commercial income and a rapid shift to online classes and events which has resulted in significant changes to our ways of working.

1) EDUCATION

Education - Schools

We bring an international dimension to teaching and learning in schools with international links, professional development opportunities, curriculum resources, classroom support and awards.

Through our global network and portfolio of schools' programmes, we connect our school sector to others throughout the world to achieve two outcomes:

- 'Enriched education' - Sustained collaboration between us and other countries on professional development, curricula and system reform, and policy dialogue, which provides improved educational outcomes for young people
- 'Global citizenship increased' – Young people and educators demonstrate an increased capacity in the skills, understanding and outlook required to work in a global economy and contribute responsibly to society, locally and globally.

Both of these outcomes contribute to a more prosperous and secure society.

These endeavours are supported by many of our programmes some of which are summarised below: -

Schools Online - a one stop global portal for teachers around the world to find school partners, explore teaching resources and establish international links for professional development.

Language Assistants - work in primary and secondary schools, including sixth form and further education colleges to support language learning and inter-cultural understanding.

International School Award - a globally recognised accreditation which helps schools to enrich learning and improve teaching by guiding international learning activities, from introducing international education into the curriculum to embedding it within a school's culture.

Education - Higher/Further Education

As an international cultural relations organisation, the British Council promotes and supports the exchange and mobility of students, scholars and academics around the world. We use our expertise in higher education to build trust and understanding with other countries by:

- supporting the development of policy and practice in the UK and internationally
- building partnerships between institutions
- promoting the mobility of academics and students

Supporting the development of policy and practice in the UK and internationally

We contribute to the development of a global academic community by providing platforms to discuss higher education globally and promoting innovative research.

We believe that engaging the UK sector in working with policy makers and practitioners and their counterparts in other countries strengthens both nations.:

We contribute to the development of a global academic community by providing platforms to discuss higher education globally and promoting innovative research.

[Going Global Conference](#): each year leaders in higher education, business and government attended the British Council's annual Going Global conference. The conference took place virtually from the 15th to the 17th June 2021. Over 70 countries were represented by delegates, including Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors, and Government Ministers. The conference invited participants to "Reimagine international tertiary education for a post-pandemic world", through the lens of three over-arching themes: the changing student body, servicing the post-pandemic society, and protecting the planet.

Education Dialogues: is a series of events happening around the world which brings together policymakers and influencers to debate the challenges and opportunities facing international higher education.

[Events](#): forums, inward missions, outward missions, study visits, roundtables, workshops, seminars. Our events aim to develop international collaborations and to be mutually beneficial.

Research and publications: we publish research and analysis that is publicly available within our [knowledge centre](#).

Building partnerships between institutions

We focus on developing education partnerships with institutions between the UK and their counterparts in other countries. Partnerships are a powerful mechanism to engage the UK internationally and to build connections, understanding and trust.

We help UK institutions to internationalise by providing market analysis and intelligence, developing research partnerships, and providing on the ground support for higher education partnerships.

We provide opportunities for higher education leaders to exchange knowledge and establish collaborations, and list them under the [events](#) and [opportunities](#) pages.

Our partnership programmes include:

[Newton Fund](#) - Aiming to strengthen science and innovation capacity and unlock further funding to support poverty alleviation in partnering countries.

[UK India Education and Research Initiative](#) (UKIERI) - Aiming to strengthen educational links between India and the UK.

[Research and Education Network for Knowledge Economy Initiatives](#) (RENKEI) - Platform for partnerships between the UK and Japan in industry and higher education.

Promoting the mobility of academics and students

We encourage international study and support the exchange and mobility of students, scholars and academics around the world because we believe that

experiencing another country first-hand provides an unparalleled opportunity for individuals to understand and engage with people from different cultures, share ideas and work to solve global challenges.

We manage a number of mobility grants and scholarships aimed at UK academics, scholars and students, details of which can be found on our [International Mobility](#) page.

Our work aims to support the capacity and capability of governments, institutions and individuals in the UK and other countries to take an active role in developing their country, their community and themselves.

Some of the more popular outward mobility programmes open to higher education students in Northern Ireland are:

Study USA

The Study USA Programme offers undergraduate students an opportunity to study business and management for one academic year at universities and colleges in the USA with the purpose of producing graduates with an international, business-oriented perspective.

TURING SCHEME

The [Turing Scheme](#) is the UK government's global programme to study and work abroad. The scheme provides funding for international opportunities in education and training across the world.

Eligible organisations can apply for funding through the Turing Scheme for projects that offer the opportunity to study or gain work experience abroad for the 2021-22 academic year.

SCIENCE

We work in partnership with the NI Science Festival to help internationalise the festival and enhance its global connections and reach.

Women's and girls' empowerment

We facilitate dialogues and networks to raise awareness and support initiatives that address the continuing inequalities that women face in society such as discrimination in the workplace. In Northern Ireland we have been exploring the international dimensions of peacebuilding and share the experience of Northern Ireland with other post-conflict societies.

2) ARTS

Our work in arts aims to promote the UK's diverse culture, creativity and innovation overseas. We work across various art forms and with the best of UK talent to develop artistic programmes and opportunities for collaboration in Northern Ireland.

Working jointly with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland through international work, we support and promote Northern Ireland's creative output.

The Artists' International Development Fund is an annual programme jointly funded by the British Council and Arts Council Northern Ireland. The aim of the programme is to support individual international developmental opportunities for talent and artistic excellence from Northern Ireland and, thereby, enhance Northern Ireland's international artistic development, reputation and standing.

British Council is a major partner in a number of festivals that occur in Northern Ireland throughout the year such as the Belfast International Arts Festival, and Outburst Queer Arts Festival.

3) ENGLISH and EXAMS

English teaching has been at the heart of the British Council's cultural relations work since 1943. What we do in English creates opportunities for millions of people around the world through education, mobility and international engagement. In Northern Ireland there are five British Council accredited English language centres.

The following initiatives have been developed to aid the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations:

- **LGBTQIA+ community for British Council colleagues**

The British Council prides itself on both its cultural relations and inclusion agenda, and one of the ways to incorporate this into our working life is the setting up a new voluntary led Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Other (LGBTQIA+) group. **LGBTQIA+ Community** aims to support colleagues identifying as LGBTQIA+ no matter where they live and work by fostering a support network and by raising a voice for LGBTQIA+ issues within the British Council. The group welcomes participation from all British Council LGBTQIA+ colleagues and allies. Each region has a regional lead who organises events and social meet-ups locally.

- **Disability Advisory Panel**

The British Council Disability Advisory Panel is made up of people with significant personal and professional experience of disability and act as a 'critical friend' to the Diversity Unit and other teams on request.

Two representatives from Northern Ireland sit on the panel: Equality Manager for Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and a Northern Ireland Disability Rights Activist. Both have great direct and indirect experience with disability and their areas of expertise are really broad. Further information about the Disability Advisory Panel can be found on our internal intranet.

- **Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei)**

In 2021, the British Council UK subscribed to membership of the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei) 'the UK's leading employer network

covering all aspects of equality and inclusion issues in the workplace’.

Whilst for cost reasons our membership is UK rather than global many of the resources available will have international applicability. Any staff member can sign up for access to a range of webinars and other online events.

- **Business Disability Forum**

British Council (via the Wellbeing team) is a member of the [Business Disability Forum](#), another fantastic resource. It's a not-for-profit membership organisation that 'exists to create a disability smart world by linking businesses, disabled people and government.' The website hosts a knowledge hub, resources and toolkits and a regular events calendar which staff can access.

- **Disability Confident Employer**

The British Council is a [Disability Confident](#) Employer which provides a step towards increasing the low numbers of disabled people within the organisation by helping us recruit and retain disabled people and people with health conditions for their skills and talent.

A self-assessment template and a matrix have been completed by colleagues in the Diversity Unit and HR with the support of the Disability Working Group.

- **EDI Toolkit & Microsoft Teams EDI page (Impact: Training and Awareness raising)**

An EDI toolkit has been written for all Northern Ireland staff and visitors to access as and when necessary. The Toolkit contains all corporate and Northern Ireland specific EDI documents. There is also a range of documents on event management and ideas on how to mainstream EDI into everyday work. There is also a section on useful resources including accessibility guides for venues across Northern Ireland, links to interfaith calendars and international diversity days, lists of nearby places of worship for staff and visitors, and links to EDI training courses. Feedback from staff suggests this is a very useful tool and helps keep all important EDI documents in one accessible place. The Toolkit continues to be updated on an ad hoc basis. All EDI related documents are also saved in a dedicated folder of the recently created EDI Teams group for easy access by all Northern Ireland staff. EDI notices and important announcements are also posted to this page for the benefit of all Northern Ireland staff.

- **Northern Ireland EDI working Group**

To ensure a co-ordinated and joined up approach to EDI across the Northern Ireland office, the EDI Working group has been very active throughout 2021/22. 7 representatives from across a range of departmental units sit on the working group, which meets monthly. An EDI action plan and wellbeing plan has been devised and the group is responsible for highlighting and celebrating international diversity days.

The main objectives of the group are to:

- Further develop an inclusive organisational culture and facilities, based on the corporate [EDI Strategy 2021](#)
- Feed into teams' Diversity Assessment Framework (DAF) submissions
- Offer professional development opportunities in capability and leadership through EDI related training

- **Mental Health Charter & Every Customer Counts**

British Council NI is a signatory of the *Mental Health Charter* for Northern Ireland employers and service providers. The Charter, jointly produced by the Equality Commission, Action Mental Health, Disability Action, Mindwise, Mental Health Foundation and Inspire provides a framework for working towards mentally healthy workplaces. As signatory to the Charter and its 5 commitments we undertake to promote positive mental health initiatives which will be beneficial to the organisation, employees and the whole community in Northern Ireland. As part of the Charter we hope to arrange for disability work shadowing opportunities in 2022/23.

- **Staff Wellbeing Strategy**

British Council Northern Ireland has embedded several initiatives to address the issue of staff wellbeing, particularly during the period of remote working during the Covid pandemic. We currently participate in the Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke Association (NICHHS) [Well Team](#) programme. A Wellbeing survey took place for all Belfast staff in Spring 2020 and we aim to repeat the survey again in 2022 to monitor any changes. Results of the survey were based around 4 areas of focus:

- personal health (provision of health checks, advice on nutrition and physical activity)
- psycho-social (focus on mental health/stress)
- physical environment (office temperature, back pain)
- community involvement (initiatives which allow staff to participate in community-based activities)

The British Council's wellbeing resources were shared widely with teams, including:

- Employee Assistance Programme
- British Council Wellbeing Playbook – useful exercises to help change your habits and focus your energy on improving your own wellbeing from one-off activities to building daily habits and routines around the following:
 1. Stress Management Techniques
 2. Wellbeing, Happiness & Positive Mental Attitude
 3. Resilience
 4. Communication & Assertiveness
 5. Time Management & Prioritisation

- Looking after Yourself and Others section of the UK Covid-19 page
- British Council Keep Well campaign
- British Council Wellbeing Toolkit for Line Managers

All documents are accessed via the British Council's Wellbeing sharepoint folder.

- **'Every Customer Counts' Commitment**

British Council Northern Ireland has signed up to the Equality Commission's *'Every Customer Counts' Commitment* which demonstrates our commitment to promoting accessible services to our customers and that we welcome reasonable adjustment requests. We completed a self-assessment tool to establish how open our services currently are to disabled people and identify how we could make improvements.

- **Living Library**

The British Council's Living Library is designed to promote dialogue between staff and encourage them to learn from and understand each other and engage directly in our rich diversity in a very direct way, led by what we are curious about and interested in. The library provides an excellent opportunity for intercultural learning and understanding of our incredible diversity. Staff may never have spoken in any detail to someone with particular experiences, or from a particular cultural or linguistic group. 'Living books' are given by members of staff who relay stories or accounts of their lives and backgrounds (or aspects of them). This includes their experiences, knowledge, struggles, achievements, interests, perspectives and aspects of their identity.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2021-22 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*)

General:

- **JAM Card (Impact: Disability & Social awareness raising)**

British Council Northern Ireland is a JAM Card friendly organisation (<https://jamcard.org/>) and we have recently (March 2022) signed up to a second three-year subscription. JAM Card is a discreet device used by people with learning difficulties, disabilities or communication barriers. JAM Card provides the means to identify people with communication barriers and hidden disabilities to give them quality customer care based on their needs. JAM (Just a Minute) Card allows people with learning difficulties, autism and communication barriers to display their card to ask for Just A Minute of patience in customer service situations. By supporting the JAM Card we show that we are supporting people with disabilities and demonstrates our commitment to being an inclusive organisation.

Users can identify and rate their interactions with JAM card friendly organisations using an App. Staff received online training in how to communicate with JAM Card users - the training included information provision on types of disabilities, real life scenarios of the experiences of JAM card users and quiz style questions. We plan to avail of further advanced disability training through JAM Card in the future.

- **Marking of International Days:**
- **LGBT History month (February 2022)**

To mark [LGBT+ History month](#) the latest edition of [#FiveFilmsForFreedom](#) returned for 2022 and staff joined together to watch a selection of the films followed by a short discussion/reflection.

About Five Films for Freedom

In partnership with BFI Flare: London LGBTIQ+ Film Festival, the British Council makes five LGBTIQ+ themed short films available for the world to watch online for free, over an 11-day period each year. Through our global network in more than 100 countries, we encourage people to watch the films in solidarity with LGBTIQ+ communities particularly in places where freedom and equal rights are limited in recognition of the fact that Love is a Human Right. Running since 2015, the programme has been seen by more than 15 million people. The films have been watched in over 200 countries and principalities, including many parts of the world where homosexuality is criminalised, and in some cases, punishable by the death penalty.

- **IDAHOT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) (17 May 2021)**

Staff were invited to attend events to celebrate [International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia](#) (IDAHOBIT) - a worldwide celebration of sexual and gender diversities and a day to raise awareness of violence and discrimination experienced by people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions and sex characteristics.

Here were some of the events taking place:

- The [European chapter of the international LGBTQI+ federation International Lesbian and Gay Association \(ILGA\)](#) released its annual Rainbow maps and reports, an annual benchmarking tool, which ranks 49 countries in Europe on their LGBTI equality laws and policies.
- [TGEU](#), a member-based organisation that represents trans communities in Europe and Central Asia, will also release its annual Trans Rights Europe and Central Asia Map.
- The [UN Free and Equal campaign](#) released its annual IDAHOBiT video.
- Under the banner of IDAHOBiT but postponed until September 2021, the International LGBTQ+ Rights Festival (ILRF) programmed a [72-hour Virtual Arts Festival](#) in solidarity with the continued struggle for LGBTQ+ rights worldwide.

Staff could also access the dedicated social media sites for further updates: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and use the [IDAHOBiT resources](#) and [British Council Brand Hub IDAHOBiT resources](#)

- **Black History Month (October 2021)**

To mark Black History Month 2021, the Diversity Unit invited colleagues to participate in a range of events and activities. The annual campaign is about acknowledging the contribution and celebrating the achievements of black people of African descent globally throughout history.

The UK campaign theme was 'Proud to Be' and to reflect the celebratory, positive, affirming feel at the heart of Black History Month and this theme we invited colleagues to submit their favourite artwork by a black artist of African descent. Several pieces had equally popular votes, so we created a video to show the wonderful diversity of the artwork with a range of themes and stories from around the world.

A range of events took place throughout the month including:

Black Professionals: Attraction, Retention and Belonging webinar

Two sessions on Anti-black racism (the session explored what anti-black racism is, how it is perceived and considered how to address it within the British Council)

Two sessions on Allyship (the session considered what allyship means especially in the context of anti-racism and discussed the groups that exist in our organisation to promote and support allyship)

Black History Month Quiz (there were rounds on general knowledge, music and pictures covering key issues, people and events relating to black history and contemporary culture.)

Diversity Assessment Framework (DAF) 2020 good practice in anti-racism learning and development (the session highlighted how learning has been applied and how it made a positive impact on the culture of the operation)

Pearn Kandola, a business-psychology consultancy had a series of events on the Monday of each week in October 2021 on the topic of how to become a race inclusive organisation.

British Council colleagues were invited to join events organised by the UK Government department for Transport and the Home office: [Department for Transport events listings](#) and the [Home office events listings](#).

All event recordings and further information were saved to a dedicated Black History Month intranet page.

- **International Day of People with a Disability 2021 (3 December)**

We held an internal campaign to help all global colleagues learn how we can make British Council a better place to work for disabled people and to improve how we work with disabled people in our activities.

We shared resources about disability that colleagues might find useful for learning and development, or that could be used with colleagues to think about disability for British Council staff and for the work we do.

Staff were invited to a wealth of events to mark the day including:

- **Collection and analysis of disability data for British Council staff** (The pros and cons of providing disability data)
- **Top tips for improving content and digital accessibility** (top tips for improving our day-to-day communications)
- **20-minute mindfulness moment** to encourage staff to pause and to pay attention to what's happening in the present moment focussing on mental health and well-being.
- **Disability arts – why it's time to act** (On 3 December we launched two major reports related to our British Council disability arts portfolio. This session introduced the two reports, shared experiences of working in disability arts and considered the future directions it could take).
- **Disability awareness** (to consider definitions of disability and the social model of disability, exploring the moral, business and legal case for disability equality for British Council, recognising and challenging unconscious biases and attitudes).
- **Gaining, retaining and progression for disabled people in employment** (disability inclusion in employment, sharing good practice and insights from colleagues).
- **Accessible Events and Visits toolkit** (An overview of the updated guidance and standards that all colleagues involved in managing visits and events should be using to help ensure our work is more accessible and beneficial for everyone, including disabled people).

In the Northern Ireland office specifically, we had planned to mark the day with a staff talk from RNIB on blind awareness using two volunteers with sight impairment, however the session had to be postponed for operational reasons, with a view to running it later in 2022.

- **International Day of Older Persons (1 October)** - as age is one of our 6 EDI focus areas, we circulated a resource pack to support colleagues across the organisation to engage with this EDI area which is also available on our intranet site.

- **International Women's Day (8 March 2022)**

To mark International Women's Day on Tuesday 8th March, the Northern Ireland EDI group ran a session on gender bias in the workplace. The session included a powerpoint presentation on gender bias and its effects and the group looked at various scenarios and discussed how gender bias was at play. Several group members candidly described their own experiences of gender bias in the workplace during the session.

Corporately, The Diversity Unit invited all staff to join a panel discussion to mark International Women's Day. The themes of International Women's Day were [Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow](#) (the United Nations theme) and [#BreakTheBias](#) to end stigma, stereotypes, harassment and discrimination (the InternationalWomensDay.com theme). The panellists discussed these themes with members of our Disability Advisory Panel who talked about how gender equality affects them as disabled people and breaking the bias around disability and gender discrimination.

- **World Mental Health Day – 10 October 2021**

To recognise World Mental Health Day on Sunday 10th October, our mental health champion for the Northern Ireland office held a session for staff to come together to talk and think of ways that we can work to improve our mental health using the Aware NI DOT campaign (Do one Thing!). The aim was to encourage people to Do One Thing they currently don't do to try and improve their mental health such as exercise, talking about your feelings, keeping in touch, doing something you are good at. Staff also participated in some interactive activities surrounding mental health.

- **Staff Training**

The following additional training sessions were also available to all UK staff throughout the period:

- 1) Menopause Awareness Session & Guidance (25 January 2022)**

The session raised awareness of the importance of supporting staff with menopausal symptoms in order to break down barriers for female staff in progressing to senior management positions. It was also intended to provide some context for the development of a future Menopause Policy within British Council in order to support staff with menopausal symptoms in work. We had input from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions who provided highlights of their written guidance for Employers and Employees. The Labour Relations Agency described how we as an organisation should fairly manage women experiencing symptoms of the menopause and Equality Commission NI provided details of the equality law implications and the lessons from case law. We also benefitted from hearing about how a menopause workplace policy has been implemented at the Education Authority for Northern Ireland. Staff and line managers gained an increased awareness of menopausal symptoms and how to seek/provide support to staff experiencing them. As a result of the session, a guidance

document has been devised for Northern Ireland staff in order to ensure there is a formalised approach to implementing reasonable adjustments for menopausal staff and to ensure staff and line managers are aware of the procedures to follow to ensure staff are fully supported.

2) Mindfulness session (May 2021)

Practical session for staff using the power of mindfulness as a technique to address personal wellbeing.

3) Wellbeing webinar (May 2021) with Aware NI in association with NI Chest Heart & Stroke Association

This two hour webinar taught skills and techniques to look after staff's mental health, manage feelings when stressed, worried or depressed and help cope with challenges in the workplace and home life.

4) Gender training (Feb 2022)

A senior gender advisor from our internal Gender team provided training to staff to improve understanding of the drivers and impact of gender inequality, why and how the British Council is contributing to this and how to integrate gender equality into our day to day work.

5) Gender training as part of International Women's Day (see above)

6) RNID deaf awareness & sign language training (3 March 2022)

A trainer from RNID with hearing loss provided the two hour training session for staff who developed an awareness of deafness and hearing loss and improved communication skills and confidence when speaking to colleagues and customers who are deaf or have hearing loss. As a result of the positive feedback from staff after the training, a 3 day sign language course was implemented for 10 staff in May to learn some basic sign language and be able to communicate confidently with deaf people at events or meetings. A follow-up sign language course will be rolled out later in the year.

7) The following anti-racism training was also provided for staff during the year:

- Legacies of the Canada-UK imperial relationship - GNT discussion
- Allyship training
- Micro-behaviours session
- Anti-black racism training session
- A conversation on decolonisation, anti-racism and gender in the Pakistan context

These sessions encouraged us to think about language and terminology in all our interactions, how to become an ally and to understand anti-black racism which has helped us challenge our own assumptions and stereotypes and question and challenge anti-black racism when it becomes evident. One colleague gained further training on Black Cultural Dichotomy and Addressing Anti Muslim Hostility through Belfast City Council to support her in running the New Narratives project with Northern Ireland schools, a project which aims to break down and challenge racial stereotypes by foregrounding the professional expertise of the New Narratives alumni.

8) Monthly Greenwich Cafés - an open and informal space to learn more about the progress of the organisation's anti-racism programme and

participate in vibrant discussion on related topics. The café sessions keep the spirit of conversation, reflection and inclusiveness to model the culture change we want to see.

9) JAM Card Training

Staff received online training in how to communicate with JAM Card users - the training included information provision on types of disabilities, real life scenarios of the experiences of JAM card users and quiz style questions. We plan to avail of further advanced disability training through JAM Card in the future.

• External Monitoring

We have been conducting equality monitoring of participants in Northern Ireland based programmes across the 9 protected characteristics since 2016. This exercise goes beyond our legal monitoring requirements under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and in doing so we demonstrate our commitment to understanding of the level of diversity of programme participants and to taking action to address under-representation to ensure our programmes are as inclusive as possible. A link to the monitoring form is sent by the programme team at the point of the participant being approved and receiving a grant agreement from us. This year we expanded the monitoring exercise to include participants in our School Think Next series of online events which provided a forum to engage with ideas about the future of education in Northern Ireland schools (Jan-Feb 2021). We collate results and benchmark them against NI census data.

The NI EDI group has drilled down into the results this year to gain a better understanding of the reasons for under-representation. Results show an over-representation of females, and young, unmarried participants without dependents. Participants are mainly white and heterosexual (although in line with national averages), and we continue to see an over-representation of grammar schools and participants from a Roman Catholic community background. However, due to some concrete actions, we have seen an increase in diversity this year and in particular, an increase in the number of disabled participants.

The following actions have been implemented which have increased the diversity of participants in our programmes:

- Targeting STEM subjects has increased the number of male participants
- Targeting graduates rather than under-graduates has increased male representation
- Use of a statement to welcome applications from under-represented schools which increased participation of single-sex boys, integrated and rural schools
- Amendments to application criteria on academic qualifications has increased the diversity of applicants (particularly males)
- A specific reasonable adjustment statement was added to the application form and website which has increased the number of applications from disabled participants
- Detailed categorisation of disabilities in the equality monitoring form has increased the declaration level of disability (including neurodiversity) and encouraged participants to declare that they have a disability throughout the application/matching process within Study USA– rising from 5% in 2019/20 to 13% in 2021/22
- Participants have been encouraged at promotional events to declare their sexual orientation and disability on monitoring forms and given an assurance that they

can be matched to a suitable placement or provided with a reasonable adjustment wherever possible

- A speaker from a Mental health charity Aware NI presented to students at pre-departure sessions, providing support and awareness of mental health issues among participants and ensured inclusivity of disabled participants
- A review of language and terminology in promotional resources and online content took place to ensure we are being as inclusive as possible and do not discourage applications from under-represented groups eg reference to 'young' people was removed from all webpages in one programme as it had the potential to deter participation from older applicants

An increase in diversity of our programme participants as a result of concrete actions has proven our commitment to providing equality of opportunity across the nine protected characteristics and an inclusive approach to programming. A more diverse cohort of participants has helped promote good relations between participants from differing religious belief, political opinions, racial groups and sexual orientations and inclusion of participants with disabilities (including hidden disabilities) has helped create a sense of tolerance and acceptance. In the coming year, we will expand the data capture to include social disadvantage by measuring the number of participants who have been eligible for free school meals.

During the year we have liaised closely with wider British Council departments, offering advice and support in their endeavour to roll out a pilot monitoring exercise for programmes within their teams.

- **Internal Monitoring**

The Global Network Group (of which several Northern Ireland staff are part) piloted an equality monitoring exercise in 2020/21 and action to address under-representation continued throughout 2021/22. The under-represented groups are as follows: 1) women at senior management level 2) minority ethnic representation at all levels 3) disabled staff, which although is fairly good at 9%, is particularly low at senior levels.

Due to the positive impact of action arising from the monitoring exercise, we have repeated the exercise in 2022 and have expanded the scope of monitoring to incorporate data on Global Network leadership roles. We plan to further expand monitoring activity to include programme participants following the lead from Northern Ireland office and we have shared learnings with wider teams across the organisation. All five deep dive sessions which were carried out in 2021 were well attended and provoked lively discussion about how under-representation could be addressed. After the sessions, action notes were produced and consolidated into a working document which informed the creation of a joint departmental EDI Action Plan - a detailed plan of activity across all EDI areas with added Gantt chart to plan and monitor timelines. One of the deep dive sessions focussed on socio-economic background which was a proactive step to discuss the links between socio economic background and organisational inequality. A poll indicated that staff were keen to track socio-economic background at organisational level, and therefore we will incorporate socio-economic background into future monitoring to show our commitment to supporting inclusion of working-class people from low-income backgrounds in line with the UK Government 'levelling up' strategy.

To increase the diversity of candidates in recruitment pools we used **targeted advertising of job opportunities** using specific publications/ organisations/networks to share vacancies through their networks across all EDI groups in particular targeting

women's organisations. This was used in the recruitment of Northern Ireland Advisory Committee Chair in November 2021 in an effort to increase the diversity of the committee membership, specifically targeting women's groups. A female Chair was recruited. It was also used in the external recruitment of a vacancy in the NI office which attracted 102 applications across a diverse range of characteristics.

Positive impact on monitoring data as a result of actions taken include:

- 1) Minority Ethnic – 10% increase in minority ethnic representation at senior level
- 2) Disability- increase in disability representation at senior by 5%
- 3) Gender - increase of 8% in female representation at senior level

ARTS:

Belfast Exposed UK-Australia traveller project

As part of the UK:Australia Season: *We, Us, Them* was a collaborative exhibition between Belfast Exposed and the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne which acts as a platform through which seven female artists explore personal reflections on communal history, identity and place. The project's ambition was to connect and promote indigenous languages and cultures, acknowledging the positive changes and achievements of such communities surviving and adapting to their changing environments. The artists featured in '*We, Us, Them*' approach this representation from a rich variety of viewpoints, charting the multiple expressions of group and community identity, whilst also exploring the basis of collaboration. Supports longer-term and legacy connections post exhibition. The project featured 5 of Australia's most contemporary female photographers and videographers, and Belfast photographer, Deirdre Robb, and socially engaged artist, Lesley Cherry. It brought together over 40 images and videos in a celebration of the power of community, communities of artist's, women, extended family and of the Irish Traveller and Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to society in their native country. A simultaneous exhibition of *We, Us, Them* commenced on the 18th in February in Melbourne at the Centre for Contemporary Photography in the city.

Outburst 2021

A group of EU Bespoke Brokers LGBTQ+ delegation of artists and producers from France, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Greece, Romania and Italy visited the Outburst Queer Arts Festival in November 2021. Covid prevented regular Americas and MENA connections but work from these regions supporting LGBTQ+ artists was still present and profiled and supported ongoing Covid recovery assisted by British Council for marginalised artists. A specific EU focus has allowed new connections in Europe in Nov 2021 and substantially has catalysed a close working group of delegates with 3 new grants to artists projects supported and a future outbound EU delegation to Transform, Marseilles in France in May 2022. The group of countries and delegates were diverse beyond LGBT identities with interest in issues impacting Europe currently - migrant and refugees and supporting arts provision in Greece and new communities arriving in Athens or work happening for LGBT prisoners in Italy as well as having practice and issues current in Northern Ireland perspectives. The project resulted in 3 new collaborative grant awards and the second outbound delegation will follow up in France in May 2022 supporting profile, visibility and networks for LGBTQ+ artists. The resulting

impact was a queering of our Festivals focus, building collaboration, empowering queer voices & supporting a contemporary Northern Ireland.

British Council Berlin Literature Seminar

We presented a Northern Ireland Literature showcase that was not only a contemporary snapshot of a burgeoning Northern Ireland scene but one that presented new voices and new writers and writing even and despite of a small Northern Ireland scene. Grants to artists invested in writers that may not have otherwise had the opportunity. Content included a new film and publishing from gender non-conforming poet around the Sensual City and the writer's perspective empowering their voice and their presence in the city of Belfast. Working with Literature department, Northern Ireland Arts & EDI and Germany, the programme featured neurodiversity, LGBTQ+, black writer, writers from rural and city communities and neighbourhoods, English writer on disability allyship - a diversity that created a richer programme of discussion and presentation in Berlin.

EDUCATION:

Language Trends Northern Ireland

The 2021 biennial Language Trends Northern Ireland research was launched on 2nd June with an online teacher and pupil panel discussion as well as a presentation of the report's main findings from lead researcher Dr Ian Collen (Director, NICILT). This year's research attracted responses from 15% of primary schools, 57% of post-primaries and over 1,500 Year 9 pupils. In addition, we also ran a number of focus groups with a selection of Year 9 pupils.

The research revealed that languages have all but collapsed in primary schools due to Covid-19, while figures remain largely unchanged at post-primary since our 2019 research. French continues to decline at GCSE and A level, with Spanish occupying the top spot at A level. If trends continue, Irish is likely to overtake French in second place at A level. German numbers remain precariously low.

Just 44% of pupils surveyed plan to take a language for GCSE, with one in 10 planning to continue their language at A level. While some focus group participants said that they may use languages in their future careers, none said they could definitely see languages in their future careers.

The full report, together with a recording of the launch event, can be accessed [here](#) and hard copies of the report can be arranged upon request.

A Bridge to France – joint STEM and Languages Project with W5 Science and Discovery Centre

W5 Science & Discovery Centre continued to build upon the skills and knowledge gained from our previous programme in 2020-21 - *A Bridge to France*, and further develop its success, by offering the programme to a further 14 primary schools across Northern Ireland in 2021-22. The digital engagement, which was incorporated into last year's programme, was integrated into a hybrid version of face-to-face and digital engagement with schools.

This year's programme engaged with fourteen Key Stage 2 classes. The programme gave students and teachers an opportunity to engage with a French speaking language assistant, and participate in activities delivered by W5, which enhanced skills in STEM. It demonstrated the positive impacts on children's learning when international links are utilised and embedded into the curriculum, providing teachers with a model which can be integrated in future teaching plans.

'*A Bridge to France*' brought together learning about French celebrations, customs, culture, and language, with the discovery of the amazing engineering involved in designing some of the famous structures throughout France, such as the Eiffel Tower or the Millau Viaduct - the tallest bridge in the world. The programme culminated with four celebrational events, where schools used their skills and knowledge, gained over the course of the programme, to compete and build the most outstanding 'Bridge to France'.

All teachers agreed that this programme successfully highlighted the importance of global links within education. This was demonstrated to them through the high level of pupils' engagement and learning throughout the programme.

New Narratives

New Narratives is a five-year British Council programme which aims to build new and stronger connections between young people across the countries of Africa and the UK - it aims to contribute to updating the narrative, stimulating dialogue around arts, culture and education.

We implemented a New Narratives project for post-primary schools across Northern Ireland. Each school received two funded online sessions of 40 - 60 minutes which were facilitated by alumni of the [New Narratives Programme](#).

The sessions were designed in co creation with each school, offering the opportunity to work with a specific subject area, an extra-curricular group or feed into careers education. The sessions ran in March 2022 (some sessions ran into April 2022 due to connectivity or timetabling issues). The sessions for post primary schools were designed to expand the New Narratives programme for a schools' audience, building on the extensive expertise amongst the New Narratives alumni of young influencers working across the African Continent.

A consultative conversation with the Northern Ireland Education Authority Diversity and Inclusion team before commencement of the project, suggested the project should allow schools to co-create their sessions and decide the best application of the project within their school. The concept of co-creation mitigated the risk of presenting high achieving role models in an inappropriate context and encouraged teachers to draw on the inspirational potential of the facilitators. One school chose to address the session to their school wellbeing group. Their sessions were facilitated by a morning show broadcaster, who also has a background in education and personal experience as a parent of a child with special needs. Another school selected their enterprise and social justice groups to work with two facilitators who have expertise as social entrepreneurs. The sessions sat alongside two artists commissions where artists from Northern Ireland were selected to interpret the New Narratives report for a youth audience.

As part of the sessions, politics and history pupils had the opportunity for frank discussion around inequality, the history of apartheid, the role of the media and were given examples of campaigns in which the young influencers were involved. Others were offered an alternative narrative on enterprise across the African continent,

challenging discussions on the SDGs and an example of leadership in the sphere of women's empowerment and wellbeing education.

This is a pilot project with potential to grow. It is an example of how British Council's existing network of young leaders from a range of programmes may reach and engage with a schools/ NFE audience.

The New Narratives project has helped strengthen anti-racism amongst the pupils in the participating schools. Northern Ireland is awaiting data from the 2021 census, which may indicate a changing demographic in a location where people of African descent have not been widely represented and perceptions of the African continent may often be based around donor relationships. Northern Ireland is the least ethnically diverse region in the United Kingdom. According to the [2011 census](#), only 1.8% of the usually resident population of Northern Ireland belonged to minority ethnic groups, which was more than double the proportion in 2001 (0.8%). The main minority ethnic groups were Chinese, Indian, Mixed and Other Asian, each accounting for around 0.3% of the usually resident population. A further 0.1% of people were Irish Travellers. The New Narratives project intervention is therefore particularly relevant in the Northern Ireland context.

The initiative furthers anti-racism in that the personal story of each facilitator provided a 'New Narrative' between the countries of Africa and Northern Ireland. The project aimed to break down and challenge racial stereotypes by foregrounding the professional expertise of the New Narratives alumni, with their experience and perceptions as young influencers from the African continent woven in. The scheme also offered a direct opportunity for post primary pupils to engage with the young influencers, in contrast to school partnerships which are based on peer-to-peer teacher links. Four non-selective schools (non-grammar) were chosen as a way to address social disadvantage as non-selective schools tend to have a disproportionate number of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged areas in their enrolments. One of the schools has a 52% newcomer intake.

The programme has helped further develop some Northern Ireland staff members' understanding of anti-racism in a real context. Three staff members within the Northern Ireland team attended the sessions to gain experience of the project in practice and learn from the professional expertise of the New Narratives alumni and in doing so further expanded their anti-racism learning and development. Prior to the sessions, one member of staff gained training on Black Cultural Dichotomy and Addressing Anti Muslim Hostility through Belfast City Council to support them in running the New Narratives project with the Northern Ireland schools. The staff members' involvement in the project reinforced our commitment to building organisational understanding of anti-racism and decolonisation in cultural relations and helped strengthen our position as an anti-racist organisation in Northern Ireland. The positive outcomes resulting from the project were shared with members of the Northern Ireland EDI working group as a way of celebrating and championing good practice in anti-racism initiatives.

Four of the project facilitators are part of the 'Azombwe' group which has been awarded a British Council grant to develop a project focused on narratives in education – teaching post primary pupils history through digital gaming. The four participating schools in Northern Ireland will have the opportunity to extend their work with the Azombwe facilitators as they build their project. Details of the project were posted via social media channels throughout and we also shared learning with Executive Office NI.

Feedback from one of the school's headteacher was as follows: "*The project was certainly effective from an inclusion and diversity perspective. The pupils were engaged*

by this approach and were hooked on the success stories of both facilitators. Their enthusiasm and drive had a positive effect on the group. The personal stories from both individuals enhanced the interest of the students and we felt this was motivational to the aspirations of our students here in Magherafelt. The visualisation exercise encouraged this. The themes of political policy and social aspects of the African continent were introduced in such a way that the students were encouraged to think independently about their views of Africa, and they were made aware of the ongoing development and progress of the continent. The ice breaker stimulated their thinking in this area. Both sessions were progressive in their attempt to reduce anti-racism, although I am glad to say we don't have a problem generally with such in school or with the group of students involved."

Harkin International Disability Employment Summit

The British Council was delighted to support the Harkin International disability summit for its first time in the UK. The Harkin Summit was held in Belfast on 7-8 June 2022 with organisers confirming that it was the biggest summit to date with delegates from over 30 countries in attendance. During the period, the British Council Northern Ireland made preparations for its participation in the event.

The British Council supported the conference in a number of ways. We promoted the conference through our social channels across the network, helping to drive interest in the conference internationally. We also worked with our schools' adviser to the British Council who chaired a panel looking at international SEND policies for schools and set this in the context of policy in Northern Ireland and focussed on helping pupils with SEND to live and thrive in society and the world of work. The purpose of this session was to discuss the challenges and opportunities of cross-departmental policy making in relation to schools and pupils with additional needs. In so doing, the panel brought together perspectives from the UK and further afield as policy makers considered issues such as access and engagement and the importance of creating school policy, practice and culture that supports inclusion

Ahead of the conference we also worked with the Harkin team to pilot our GROW mentoring programme for young people with disabilities. This was launched ahead of the summit and those who successfully got on to the programme also were able to attend the summit. Each young person received bespoke mentoring from a successful social innovator. The purpose was for the young people to become better equipped in developing their own creative enterprises – and will form an active network with fellow participants once the scheme has finished. Equality monitoring of participants has taken place including a new category on socio-economic background which the majority of participants do come from so it is very positive that we are reaching young, disabled people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our country director also volunteered for 'mentoring moments' at the summit, where he was paired with people with disabilities to share in a one-to-one session his experience of leadership. This was a two-way process and was also really useful in developing disability competence for our director.

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2021-22 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes X No (go to Q4) Not applicable (go to Q4)

Please provide any details and examples:

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

Other *(please specify and give details):*

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- X No, has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The job descriptions and person specifications for advertised vacancies contain a statement of British Council Northern Ireland's commitment to its equal opportunity and good relations obligations under Section 75.

The following text appears in the role profile of all advertised vacancies: -

OUR EQUALITY COMMITMENT:

Valuing diversity is essential to the British Council's work. We aim to abide by and promote equality legislation by following both the letter and the spirit of it to try and avoid unjustified discrimination, recognising discrimination as a barrier to equality of opportunity, inclusion and human rights.

As an Equal Opportunities Employer, all job applicants are required to complete an Equal Opportunity and Diversity Monitoring Form. Provision of this information is voluntary and assists the British Council in its commitment to a policy of equal opportunity and the development of positive policies to promote equal opportunity in employment. The British Council welcomes applications from all sections of the community as we believe that a diverse workforce gives added depth to our work. We aim to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the basis of gender including transgender, marital status or civil partnership, sexual identity, religion and belief, political opinion, race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin, work pattern, age, disability or HIV/AIDS status, socio-economic background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, on the basis of having or not having dependants, or any other irrelevant grounds.

The British Council monitors all stages of our recruitment and selection process to ensure there is no potential for unjustified discrimination on irrelevant grounds. Our monitoring data is externally analysed each year, and recommendations are published and acted upon. All information supplied is treated in strict confidence and no identifying details are attached to it. It helps us to monitor and evaluate the success and application of our equal opportunity policy and diversity strategy and to compile anonymised statistics which are included within our formal reporting structures.

A specific requirement relating to Community Background is requested within the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Monitoring Form for applicants applying for posts that have the potential to be based in the Northern Ireland office whereby applicants are encouraged to declare their Community Background, regardless of which location they are applying from. We monitor the Community Background of our job applicants and employees in order to demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity in employment and to comply with our duties under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

An additional section is attached to the British Council application form for internal and external vacancies. This section states that the British Council operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for a vacancy. All disabled applicants are asked to confirm whether reasonable adjustments are required (and to specify the nature of those adjustments) at application stage.

The British Council has a Core Skills dictionary which sets out the skills which are required most often in roles throughout the British Council. They include a requirement for team leaders to coordinate a diverse team with awareness of equality and diversity impact as part of project specifications. The Dictionary also specifies that in all communications with internal and external audiences, staff must demonstrate an awareness of a diverse audience in speaking and writing.

All staff worldwide are required to ensure their behaviour is consistent with our policies.

- 5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)
- Yes, organisation wide
 - Yes, some departments/jobs
 - No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
 - No, this has already been done
 - Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Senior Managers' leadership role is critical to embedding our EDI principles by becoming involved in diversity initiatives and projects. They ensure that Equality Impact Assessments of key policies, programmes and services are carried out as required. In general, senior managers champion EDI, promote the merits of a good work-life balance and initiate activities to back this up. SLT must have an EDI deliverable in the performance plans.

All staff are also encouraged to dedicate a performance management objective to Equality Diversity and Inclusion and spend time thinking about what EDI means to them, their experiences and how they can improve their knowledge of EDI as well as how to put this into practice in the workplace. Staff are also encouraged to commit

time to looking in detail on the intranet at our EDI Policy, Diversity Strategy and the British Council's approach to equality and diversity as well as discrimination legislation.

Marketing and Communications staff play a pivotal role in communicating our EDI commitment to our audiences by ensuring all images used in communications reflect diversity. They also must ensure access to our communications for disabled people and speakers of minority languages and implement changes to address inequalities.

Facilities staff must create the environment in which all customers and colleagues can feel safe and secure by ensuring all refurbishment projects incorporate communication of a clear message of inclusion and accessibility to a wide range of people, for example, disabled people and people with young children. In the Northern Ireland office, Disability Action have supported us in addressing access issues and ensuring personal evacuation plans are in place for anyone who might need additional support in the event of an emergency.

The British Council Disability Working Group comprises of seven staff from across the UK who give 5% of their time to the group. They meet about six times a year and help us to take forward the disability related action points in our Integrated Equality Scheme and to generally keep disability on the corporate agenda.

Programme staff ensure that every participant attending our events feel welcomed and valued by checking all venues for accessibility issues. We also ensure that equality monitoring data (as a minimum in the areas of gender and age) for customers is carried out to identify under- and over-represented groups and results are discussed and acted upon in relation to the local context and local demographics. Programme staff also provide catering at all events that meets the diversity of participants.

For all Northern Ireland staff, if they have a particular examples of how they have promoted equal opportunities and good relations in an aspect of their work, this is championed throughout the Northern Ireland office and fed to our UK Diversity Team.

6 In the 2021-22 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan

Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning

Yes, in some departments/jobs

No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan

No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2021-22 report

Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

As part of Strategy 25, we undertook a review of our values in 2021 to ensure that they aligned with the new vision, purpose, strategic pillars and offers. Our values must help us create the culture we need to deliver effectively. This has become even more important as we face challenges that we couldn't possibly have imagined this time last year.

The British Council's new three corporate values are at the heart of what we do and how we work. They are: 1) We are open and committed: Our belief in what we do translates into a deep and long-term commitment to the people we work with and the places where we work. We tackle challenges and take responsibility with openness and honesty to bring about positive change 2) We are expert and inclusive: Inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. By involving everyone in the conversation we learn from each other and bring together all of our experience, knowledge and expertise to do the best work that we can. 3) We are optimistic and bold: We believe in the potential of young people to create a better world. Inspired by this optimism, we are positive and creative, and we focus on what works. We are not afraid to make bold choices to shape a better future for everyone.

The development of the new values involved everyone. We ran a Values Team Talk session for colleagues in January 2020, led by line managers, as well as a number of webinar sessions that everyone was invited to join. Across the network, more than 2,000 colleagues took part.

The British Council's [Corporate Plan](#) outlines the organisation's commitment to continue to enable the people of the UK to share their culture and way of life with over 600 million people and partners throughout the world, through the programme areas of Arts, Cultural Engagement, and English. Promoting equality of opportunity and good relations is integrated into this intention. We set diversity targets in our Corporate Plan through the Diversity Assessment Framework (DAF). The UK DAF target for 2021 is four out of six (an increase from our 2020 target of four out of ten).

We run mentoring programmes for women and have taken steps towards more flexible deployment to help colleagues appointed locally to develop and progress into more senior roles.

We have adopted more flexible deployment to broaden opportunities for locally appointed staff and maximise the diversity of our workforce. This included a transition for all staff at senior management level to a single SMT payband to give greater flexibility to redeploy senior management staff at any time across all geographical locations without the barrier of grade and payband.

EDI is mainstreamed into our Northern Ireland Country Plan. The Annual Corporate Plan outlines targets, successes to date and proposed outcomes against targets

We contribute to the UK government's commitment to international development support for stability, economic development, reduced inequalities and good governance in developing, fragile and conflict-affected countries around the world, including those vital to the UK's strategic interests. Our work will continue to align with the emerging post 2015 Development Agenda, in particular around poverty eradication, quality education, gender equality and sustainable development.

We are aware that globalisation affects every part of the UK touching the lives of citizens, changing communities and shaping our economic futures. At the same time, the UK context is changing, with an increasing focus on the diversity of the UK and

embracing the cultural strengths and involving people from across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, their regions and major cities. In order to make the greatest impact, we tailor our programmes to contribute to the policy objectives of the UK as a whole and to meet the priorities of the four nations of the UK. We value the opportunity to make greater use of the diversity of the contemporary UK as an asset in itself.

In arts we promote our innovative digital offer including the continued development of unique digital projects using our disability arts and diversity expertise.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2021-22 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:		Actions ongoing:	13	Actions to commence:	
--------------------	--	------------------	----	----------------------	--

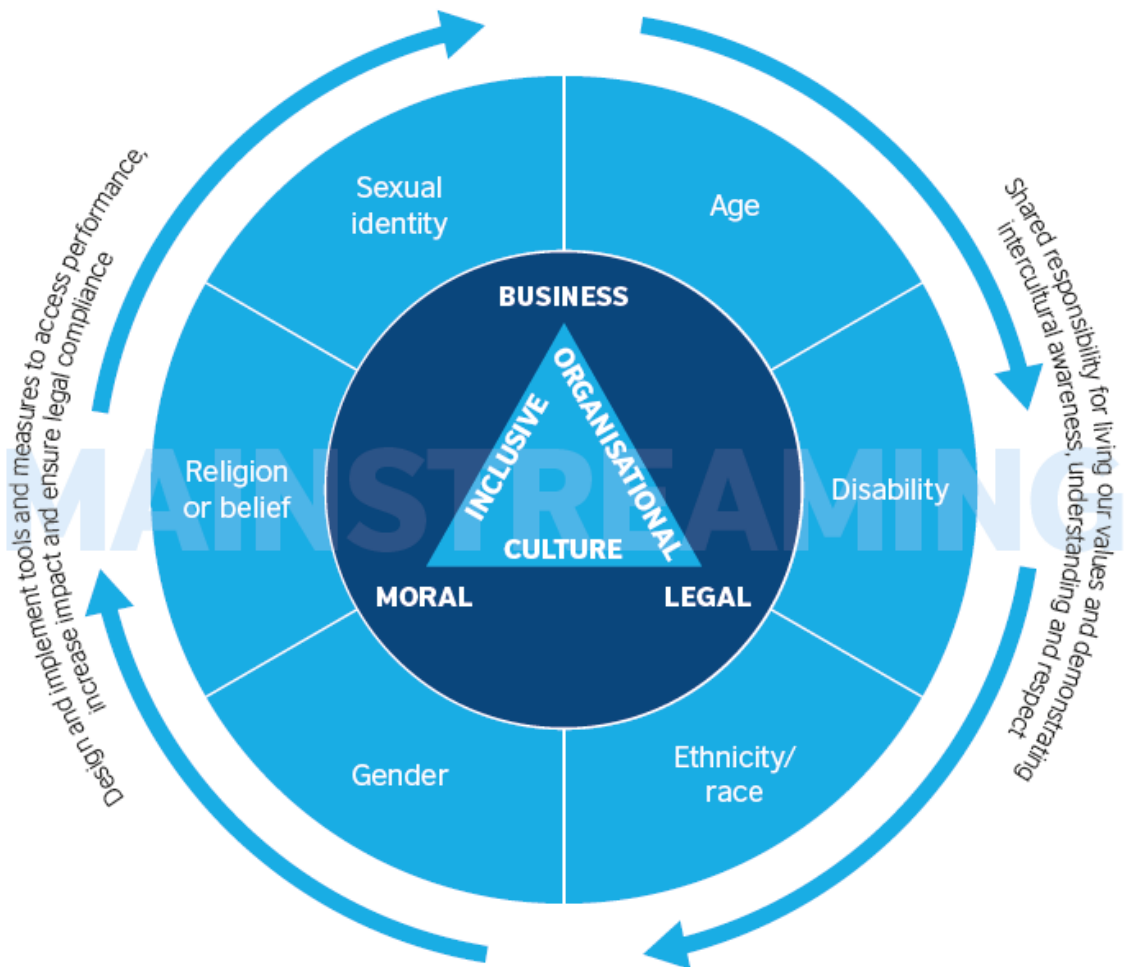
Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

1) Ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is mainstreamed into our current practices (ongoing)

- Celebration of key diversity days throughout the year
- A document entitled “Building EDI into your work” is used by all staff to integrate EDI into everyday work, split by job type. See appendices
- EDI Planning Tools: A “Guide to Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity in Project Development and Delivery” is used by all staff. This is a checklist for staff to use as guidance about how to mainstream equality and diversity principles and issues into the development, delivery and review of programme work in a more systematic and comprehensive way (see appendices)
- EDI Planning tools: For smaller one-off events, we use the checklist entitled “Questions to Support Inclusive Activities” (see appendices)
- EDI is further mainstreamed into event management using an accessibility checklist (see Appendices). All venues for British Council events are checked for accessibility and related services. The British Council policy clearly mandates they will react to specific needs which includes those requiring or requesting Personal Readers, Infra-red or induction loops, Guiders, Braille, Lip Speakers, Temporary wheelchair access lifts, and Sign Language Interpreter. In addition, there is an anticipatory duty across the following categories: Mobility, Hearing impairment, Visual impairment, Learning disabilities and difficulties, mental health and severe disfigurement. Consideration is made for religious or cultural request such as the availability of rooms for prayer and special dietary needs.
- Brand guidelines ensure documents and formats are fully accessible.
- Staff are encouraged to have an EDI objective in their performance portfolios (this has become mandatory for SLT) and a bank of example deliverables has been circulated to all Northern Ireland staff together with a self-assessment checklist

- Ongoing EDI training is rolled out annually
- Screening of all new or significantly amended policies and case studies are circulated
- Web accessibility guidelines in use: [Web Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- We have created an EDI checklist for Northern Ireland staff which captures all routine EDI related activity to adhere to in all aspects of their work.

Our mainstreaming chart which forms part of our EDI strategy is as follows:



2) Monitor data and data accuracy across all protected characteristics for staff within British Council Northern Ireland (ongoing)

The British Council's global people data system **MyHR** is a centralised, global database for all of our HR information and includes instant access to accurate and up-to-date information supported by simplified and standardised processes. MyHR also gives us a clear picture of our global workforce and ensure all our HR work is delivered in a secure, compliant and risk-controlled manner. The new system enables users to:

- access, update and manage personal data securely

- book and manage leave easily
- search for colleagues, see the organisational structure and access accurate, up-to-date data in real time
- access the Employee Service Centre (AskHR) for HR advice and system issues
- receive timely automated reminders and guidance relating to specific global processes
- any time access via the MyHR mobile app

Steps are continually taken to encourage staff to complete their personal data on the myHR system via a series of email reminders. Improvements were made to the system as a whole for assessing equality monitoring data for staff across all job bands. This has ensured that equality monitoring data is appropriately collected, kept up to date with as much consistency as possible, held as confidential sensitive data, and easily retrieved in a format for reporting purposes. We will continue to encourage staff to update this data on an ongoing basis. **NOTE: The MyHR database does NOT contain data on community background for Northern Ireland staff. Community background data is requested on an adhoc basis from our HR department and stored securely in a protected file. Only the Equality Manager has access to this data and therefore staff are unable to view or change it.**

The Global Network Group (of which several Northern Ireland staff are part) piloted an equality monitoring exercise in 2020/21 and action to address under-representation continued throughout 2021/22. The under-represented groups are as follows: 1) women at senior management level 2) minority ethnic representation at all levels 3) disabled staff, which although is fairly good at 9%, is particularly low at senior levels.

Due to the positive impact of action arising from the monitoring exercise, we have repeated the exercise in 2022 and have expanded the scope of monitoring to incorporate data on Global Network leadership roles. We plan to further expand monitoring activity to include programme participants following the lead from Northern Ireland office and we have shared learnings with wider teams across the organisation. All five deep dive sessions which were carried out in 2021 were well attended and provoked lively discussion about how under-representation could be addressed. After the sessions, action notes were produced and consolidated into a working document which informed the creation of a joint departmental EDI Action Plan - a detailed plan of activity across all EDI areas with added Gantt chart to plan and monitor timelines.

3) EDI Working Group to meet once per month to further develop an inclusive organisational culture and facilities, based on the corporate EDI Strategy and ensure a co-ordinated and joined up approach to EDI across the Northern Ireland office (ongoing)

The EDI group which represents staff from across several different teams, continues to meet once per month to discuss EDI activity and propose new EDI actions. We continue to bring EDI initiatives to staff and embed EDI into all our ongoing activity in the office. Some of the actions completed during the period are:

- Wellbeing survey and action plan, staff talks and physical challenges
- Continued use of recruitment network list for advertising job opportunities to EDI related organisations
- Collation and dissemination of EDI tools, guidance and corporate policies on dedicated Teams space
- Use of of Reasonable Adjustments log

- Provision of staff training/staff talks on a range of diversity areas by external experts
- Monthly EDI updates at staff meetings
- Marking and celebration of international diversity days throughout the year
- Assistance to staff on the creation of a dedicated EDI deliverable/objective in their performance plans
- Action plan to address inclusivity of our procurement processes
- Action plan to begin disability work shadowing scheme

4) Improve communication on EDI updates, news and best practice to all British Council Northern Ireland staff (ongoing)

A dedicated Equality Manager in the Northern Ireland office communicates with staff to increase awareness of EDI issues. Staff are kept up to date with key EDI issues and dates on an ongoing basis mainly via the physical EDI Toolkit and electronically via the newly created EDI specific Microsoft Teams page for colleagues in the Northern Ireland office. The Teams folder contains all corporate and Northern Ireland specific EDI documents. There is also a range of documents on event management and ideas on how to mainstream EDI into everyday work. There is also a section on useful resources including accessibility guides for venues across Northern Ireland, links to interfaith calendars and international diversity days, lists of nearby places of worship for staff and visitors, and links to EDI training courses. Feedback from staff suggests this is a very useful tool and helps keep all important EDI documents in one accessible place. The Teams folder will continue to be updated on an ad hoc basis.

The Equality Manager sits on two wider EDI working groups across the UK to exchange information and ideas on how to embed EDI into working practices.

Colleagues subscribing to the British Council global EDI mailbase are kept informed of ongoing issues and there are staff Bulletin notices and global staff talks around a range of EDI topics throughout the year. Further communication and training schedules are planned in 2022-23.

An EDI Working group meets monthly with 7 representatives from across the office to develop an action plan and disseminate EDI related information to staff.

EDI has become a routine item at monthly all-staff meetings in the Northern Ireland office at which time staff are provided with a monthly update of equality related issues.

5) Revise EDI training plan for all British Council Northern Ireland staff (ongoing)

Aside from the various EDI related webinars throughout the year, virtual Teams training sessions took place in the Northern Ireland office this year (see Q2 for more details).

The training plan is being revised for 2022-23 which will include a mixture of virtual and face-to-face training activity.

6) Reasonable Adjustments - record and monitor annual data on number of reasonable adjustment requests received and actioned (internally and

externally). Remain vigilant of issues affecting disabled staff and customers and ensure an accessible environment (ongoing)

Staff are encouraged to use the corporate Accessibility checklists when planning small and large scale events.

We regularly use a Reasonable Adjustments log for staff to log all reasonable adjustments requests, either internally from staff or externally from programme or events participants. This acts as a reference point for staff to ensure consistency in our approach to providing reasonable adjustments and cost implications thereof.

We have a formal global Reasonable Adjustments Policy for staff with disabilities.

We have a contact with a senior member of staff at Disability Action whom we use as a reference point and we also receive Disability Action's monthly Ezine which helps us keep abreast of issues affecting disabled people across Northern Ireland.

We continue to ensure all external communication is as accessible as possible. The Northern Ireland website is built for accessibility and usability with a clear visual hierarchy – making it easy for the user to navigate through the website content - this includes making text readable and understandable and having content appear and operate in predictable ways. We use good font size and colour contrast combinations, which is helpful for users with colour-blindness and other visual impairments and have included captions and alternatives for our audio and visual content, for those with hearing/vision difficulties.

We use inclusive language throughout the website – for example, we use 'people first' language which keeps the individual as the most essential element. Characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, racial group or ability are only used when relevant. We avoid idioms, jargons, and acronyms: which can exclude people who may not have specialised knowledge of a particular subject and impede effective communication as a result. An accessible language guide was created and disseminated to all staff in 2021.

We have collated and disseminated a range of Accessibility Guides to staff to ensure all documentation and online activity is as inclusive as possible. We ensure all staff are aware of and adhere to [Web Accessibility Guidelines](#)

We also have a webpage dedicated to visitors to British Council Northern Ireland who may have accessibility needs - <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/access-british-council-northern-ireland>. We also hope to develop a dedicated EDI webpage on the British Council Northern Ireland website to showcase our EDI activity and our commitment to EDI.

We have been working with Disability Action NI to find ways to work with disabled people through internships or work shadowing opportunities. We have investigated schemes such as Job Match this will enable us to gain feedback from disabled people regarding the level of accessibility of our physical and online environments.

7) Action to help make progress towards the protected characteristics targets, particularly in senior management (ongoing)

We run coaching and mentoring programmes for **women** and have a corporate target of 50% female representation at senior leadership level.

As a means of increasing the number of **disabled** staff across the organisation, recruitment teams have specifically addressed the issue of broadening access to those with disability by establishing contracts with specialist diversity recruiters (such as Employability, Equal Approach, Diversity Jobs) using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This has broadened access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics. In line with the British Council EDI strategy these efforts shall continue until targets have been met to address areas of under representation and remove any possible barriers to equality of opportunity. By respecting and valuing diversity we are more likely to attract talent and fresh perspectives, nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility and new opportunities and sources of support, so we remain relevant and dynamic and achieve greater reach and impact.

All staff are encouraged to declare their disability on the online HR portal and as a result there has been an increase in the response rate.

When advertising for vacancies, British Council recruitment processes ensure reasonable adjustment is actioned for candidates with disability or special needs. We also display the 'positive about disabled people' logo on all recruitment advertisements and our web pages, and offer a guaranteed interview to all disabled applicants meeting our recruitment criteria.

We also consider opportunities for disabled people to work for the British Council Northern Ireland for example through work experience or internship programmes. The EDI Working group is seeking to find ways to roll this out locally in consultation with Disability Action NI. The corporate target of disabled staff is 7%.

In terms of **ethnicity**, see **Anti-racism action plan** (in appendices) The Anti-Racism hub contains a wealth of Anti-Racism and Black Lives Matter Resources.

Our anti-racism vision is for the organisation to become anti-racist in its culture and in its practices. We will strive to give colleagues and everyone we engage with the opportunity to achieve their potential, regardless of race, ethnicity or background. We will aim to dismantle barriers across our organisation and build a more inclusive and representative workplace and leadership that embraces diversity, calls out discrimination and puts equality at its heart. Our priorities are as follows:

1. Improving our learning and understanding about racism/s and its impact
2. Supporting a more inclusive organisational culture that prioritises anti-racist actions and behaviours, leadership development, and improved ways of listening to and acting on colleagues' feedback and concerns
3. Human resource (HR) policies and practices that are reviewed, revised and undergo equality screening and impact assessment (ESIA)to ensure they promote inclusion and anti-racist principles
4. A greater diversity of nationality and race in our global leadership

5. Programmes, products and services that are deliberately anti-racist and inclusive in their development and delivery, consistent with our commitment to decolonise our work.

Within the Northern Ireland office specifically, we seek ways to increase the percentage of ethnic minority staff which is currently low (although this most likely reflect the low percentage in the local population) but this is a group which we could target when recruiting. We have created a recruitment network list which is a list of relevant organisations across all the protected characteristics which we will target when recruitment opportunities are advertised as a way of ensuring that our pool of candidates is as diverse as possible.

The **age** profile of staff will continue to be regularly monitored to ensure there are no barriers to staff in the 51+ age group. The British Council produced and disseminated a guide to all staff on Age Criteria in Selection and Recruitment in September 2021 (see appendices).

8) External Monitoring – monitoring of customers from the protected characteristic groups taking active part in programmes and activities offered by the British Council Northern Ireland (ongoing)

A questionnaire covering all section 75 protected groups is sent to all external customers across a number of programmes. The data has been recorded on a central spreadsheet and patterns and trends identified. Some underrepresentation was identified among boys, with a higher uptake of girls participating in many of our programmes, thus presenting an opportunity for us to target boys. We have also seen a greater participation rate in our education programmes amongst grammar schools over secondary schools which we will find ways to address. We will continue to monitor our customers throughout 2022-23 and will address any underrepresentation as it arises. A presentation of results will be delivered to staff in summer 2021 and action will be identified to increase participation among the following target groups:

- Males/non-binary/boys schools
- Older participants, married with dependents
- Mix of religious belief and ethnic origin
- Participants with disabilities
- Protestant community background/non-Catholic maintained schools
- Non-heterosexual participants
- Secondary schools

9) Recruitment and induction – encourage job applications from a diverse audience and an understanding of EDI from the outset (ongoing)

The Disability Advisory Forum offers a recruitment audit service that assesses the accessibility recruitment processes and procedures offering support and guidance where needs have been identified. This is also an avenue which should be further explored and disseminated to staff. As part of the general HR process, all line managers are required to perform exit interviews on all staff who leave the

organisation. This highlights any EDI related issues that may be raised and action taken.

All new staff, both permanent and temporary receive comprehensive induction training which includes an explanation of duties/responsibilities as they apply under Section 75. All new staff are given a copy of our Equality Scheme and EDI training is carried out during induction process as part of the general HR procedures. All new staff are also given a copy of the booklet "Welcome to the British Council" which contains full information on our EDI Policy.

We will seek to establish contact with specialist diversity recruiters in Northern Ireland using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This will broaden access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics. There has been a recruitment freeze during the period due to the pandemic, however the EDI group will focus on possible changes to the recruitment processes in 2022-23 in order to increase diversity of staff once the recruitment ban and Transformation programme is complete.

10) Inclusive Procurement - ensure all suppliers are aware of our EDI policy and they too have similar policies. Ensure the diversity clause appears in the main body of contracts. (ongoing)

In addition to building in reference to diversity to the supply of contracted goods and services across the reporting period, the British Council's standard contract template has been commissioned and overseen by the Legal team. The team has ensured that the contract includes specific reference to Equality Legislation and the British Council's own policies - including a link to our Policies website, which includes the Equality Policy. This template is used by colleagues across the organisation for procurement of goods and services. The template itself can be found on the Contracts Portal, with a copy uploaded to the departmental EDI SharePoint site for ease of reference.

The two specific clauses are:

"British Council Requirements" means the instructions, requirements, policies, codes of conduct, guidelines, forms and other documents notified to the Partner in writing or set out on the British Council's website at [Policies for Consultants](#) or such other web address as may be notified to the Partner from time to time (as such documents may be amended, updated or supplemented from time to time during the Term);"

"Equality Legislation" means any and all legislation, applicable guidance and statutory codes of practice relating to diversity, equality, non-discrimination and human rights as may be in force from time to time in England and Wales or in any other territory in which, or in respect of which, the Partner performs its obligations in this Agreement;"

The Equality Manger has joined a cross-departmental working group to look at the inclusivity of our procurement processes and how they can be improved.

11) External promotion of British Council EDI strategy externally to stakeholders (customers, audiences, students, candidates, alumni, partners, programme participants, etc) (ongoing)

Our dedicated [EDI Webpage](#) explains our approach that EDI is central to everything we do.

Marketing and Communications staff play a pivotal role in communicating our EDI commitment to our audiences by ensuring all images used in communications reflect diversity. They also must ensure access to our communications for disabled people and speakers of minority languages and implement changes to address inequalities

To improve our EDI performance internally and externally, we have appointed senior level **Diversity Champions**. Diversity Champions usually occupy a board or executive level position and take on this role in addition to their existing senior leadership role. Diversity Champions have a range of formal, structured and specific responsibilities with the expressed aim of driving improvements in organisational diversity performance generally, or in a specific area and operate in the Champion role in the context of the corporate strategy.

Diversity Champion activities are consistently aligned with the needs and strategic objectives of the British Council and require the Champion to develop a deep understanding of the relevance of EDI to our core work and stakeholders - and the varying ways in which it impacts our people and service delivery. They help to promote EDI and raise awareness of related issues and drive the changes required to embed EDI across the British Council: to engage staff and customers. Another benefit is that they leverage EDI benefits in terms of employee engagement, enhanced reputation and support our ambition to become a market leader in the services we deliver worldwide.

Locally, we disseminate our commitment to EDI, and the measures we take to address it, at promotional/information events to key stakeholders and customers and also through consultation. We are a JAM Card Friendly Organisation (see Q2) and champion diversity by creating diverse teams and flexing our style to appropriately match others in an inclusive way. EDI Group to seek ways of using our local Accredited Diversity Facilitator to promote our EDI message externally.

12) Ensure all online activity is as accessible as possible (ongoing)

All corporate accessibility guidelines are saved in a dedicated Teams space for staff to access. All communications online are in line with [Web Accessibility Guidelines](#) and [Public Sector accessibility guidelines](#). This year we intended to 'road test' one of our online events using a member of Disability Action to attend and provide feedback, however unfortunately this did not materialise, however it is something we intend to do in 2022/23.

Corporately, an Inclusive Language Guide was produced and disseminated to staff. We also are using a document entitled "Ten Actions for written visual and verbal communication" (see Appendices) which is another useful guide for staff.

13) Implement a wellbeing action plan in association with NI Chest, Heart and Stroke Association (ongoing)

British Council Northern Ireland has embedded several initiatives this year to address the issue of staff wellbeing, particularly during the period of remote working during the Covid pandemic. We currently participate in the Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke Association (NICHHS) [Well Team](#) programme. A Wellbeing survey took place for all Belfast staff in Spring 2020. Results of the survey were based around 4 areas of focus:

- personal health (provision of health checks, advice on nutrition and physical activity)
- psycho-social (focus on mental health/stress)
- physical environment (office temperature, back pain)
- community involvement (initiatives which allow staff to participate in community-based activities)

The survey will be repeated again in 2022/23 to monitor improvements and a further wellbeing plan will be devised.

The British Council's wellbeing resources were shared widely with teams, including :

- Employee Assistance Programme
- Bereavement resources including support for coping with grief and loss, and guidance for colleagues and line managers.
- British Council Wellbeing Playbook – useful exercises to help change your habits and focus your energy on improving your own wellbeing from one-off activities to building daily habits and routines around the following:
 - 1.Stress Management Techniques
 - 2.Wellbeing, Happiness & Positive Mental Attitude
 - 3.Resilience
 - 4.Communication & Assertiveness
 - 5.Time Management & Prioritisation
- Looking after Yourself and Others section of the UK Covid-19 page
- British Council Keep Well campaign
- British Council Wellbeing Toolkit for Line Managers

All documents are accessed via the British Council's Wellbeing sharepoint folder.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2021-22 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

None

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2021-22 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)*

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

- All the time Sometimes Never

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2021-22 reporting period, on matters relevant (eg. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

In accordance with the commitments made in our Equality Scheme we recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We consult as a matter of form on our equality scheme, equality impact assessments action measures and any other matters deemed relevant to Section 75 Statutory duties.

We carry out our consultation in accordance with the principles contained in the Equality Commissions' guidance Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (2010). All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest. We consider the accessibility and format of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process.

Specific consideration is given to how best to communicate with people with disabilities, including people with learning disabilities and minority ethnic communities. Information is made available, on request, in alternative formats in a timely manner. We ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of

consultees' comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees.

Internally, HR visit each region and conduct climate surveys on staff 'wellbeing'. This provides a forum for staff to meet face-to-face with a HR colleague, share viewpoints and outline what 'wellbeing' in its broadest context meant to them as a British Council employee. Follow up communication is circulated to staff outlining next steps and action measures.

Externally, feedback is sought from service users on all our programmes many of which are schools or college programs. The views of participants (children, teenagers and young adults) are taken into consideration directly and indirectly via teachers and program directors and help shape development and direction of future programmes and services.

The British Council Northern Ireland offers a number of internships each year (however this was on hold this year due to the pandemic) to enable a group of interns to see and experience the work of the British Council at first hand and champion the value of cultural relations.

The objectives of the internship scheme is as follows:

- To offer structured work experience placements within a specific business area to a group of interns
- To give a real introduction to the field of cultural relations to a group of interns
- To enable British Council departments to get support and benefit from a different perspective on their work

As part of the Internship programme, interns attend a three day corporate induction before joining a specific department for twelve weeks. They have a line manager and are set specific deliverables during their stay. In addition, they also undertake a group project which they present to staff and stakeholders at the end of the programme.

Work experience programmes are also managed for approximately ten school students a year and approximately five for higher education students. This scheme is co-ordinated by a local manager affording students the opportunity to gain insights into the broad remit of learning and development opportunities available according to their interests.

12 In the 2021-22 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires

- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other (*please specify*):

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

We have an extensive list of consultees from across a wide range of organisations across all the Section 75 groups. See Appendices for full list.

We ensure accessibility of all documentation by making all documents available in alternative formats on request. All documentation is also accessible on our website.

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)
- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

We informed the general public about the availability of this material through press releases where appropriate

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)
- Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

<https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/equal-opportunities-diversity>

- 15** Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

GET

- 16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2021-22:

Please provide any details:

We monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions, internal processes, staff and customers. We also monitor participation in our programmes via monitoring questionnaires and we also monitor complaints if they arise.

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (*tick one box only*)

Yes X No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2021-22 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

No changes were made to the Equality Action Plan. Please see Q7 for full details on action measures and current progress.

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

None

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2021-22, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

See Q2 for training undertaken in 2021-22.

We have in place a communication and training programme for all staff and continued to ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties was made clear in all relevant publications.

We ensure that staff are informed of interesting and relevant stories or case study examples of particular issues affecting people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme.

Our training plan for staff achieves the following objectives:

- raised awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
- provided those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and Equality Impact Assessment) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- provided those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- provided those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- provided those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the British Council Northern Ireland's equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

All British Council Northern Ireland staff and the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee have a copy of the Equality Scheme and were invited to comment on it. All new staff - both permanent and temporary have receive comprehensive induction training which included explanation of duties/responsibilities as they apply under Section 75.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is incorporated into local Induction Training programmes which covers all legal requirements under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 75 statutory duties.

EDI is an inherent component of regular British Council online training which is a mandatory requirement and which all staff must complete on an annual basis.

The Diversity Unit has created a document which includes tips to help anyone that designs or modifies websites to have web accessibility in mind. When designing a website it is important to realise how people with disabilities use the Web, what difficulties they may face and how to assist them in overcoming those difficulties.

In an attempt to raise office awareness of Diversity, we marked and celebrated some key international diversity days throughout the year and organised regional diversity weeks across our global network that have helped staff and external audiences engage with diversity issues in a new way.

As the British Council offer so many courses and programmes via web links, they are constantly growing and being updated. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is available for those designing a website which outlined advice on making the site more easily accessible to older people. Included also is a template for accessibility evaluation reports to assess if needs are being met.

We have produced a document with information for Intranet users who are visually impaired and/or who would prefer to change the appearance of the intranet pages to make them more accessible.

The Northern Ireland office has a dedicated Equality Manager who is specifically responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of their obligations in meeting the requirements of/developments within Section 75 and the commitments of our equality scheme. The Equality Manager is our direct link to other parts of the UK to ensure that our legislative requirements specific to Northern Ireland are incorporated into all policies and processes.

As a means of raising awareness of LGBT issues the British Council created the Five Films for Freedom Campaign. This was the world's first global, digital LGBT film festival initiated by the British Council and the British Film Institute and runs annually in March. The campaign seeks to promote freedom, equality and LGBT rights in 135 countries across the social media network and all staff are invited to a screening of the films annually.

Our Global Diversity Network is made up of two or more representatives from each region, who work with the Diversity Unit in a formalised way. They support their management teams in each region to mainstream equality and diversity in all our practices. They have expertise and understanding of the different cultures and contexts in which they work, so they can ensure our corporate diversity initiatives are meaningful and relevant and can be applied in each region. The GDN share ideas and good practice using a GDN mailbase. This is a mailing list that all staff interested in finding out more about equality and diversity can subscribe to. It is a place for sharing good practice, asking for advice from other colleagues and joining in debates and discussions about topical issues related to global equality and diversity so that we can all learn from each other around equality and diversity.

- 25** Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Feedback from staff showed that the online mandatory EDI training is clear and informative.

The following staff talks/training sessions were extremely well received by staff locally.

- Menopause Awareness Session & Guidance (25 January 2022)
- Mindfulness session (May 2021)
- Wellbeing webinar (May 2021) with Aware NI in association with NI Chest Heart & Stroke Association
- Gender training (Feb 2022)
- RNID deaf awareness & sign language training (3 March 2022)
- Range of anti-racism training (throughout the year)
- JAM Card Training (online, Feb – Mar 2022)

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2021-22, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

While programmes are open to all sections of the community, the uptake and participation rates are monitored to determine if positive action can be taken to increase participation amongst those from disadvantaged areas or those from minority groups. We hope to do some more work in this area in 2022-23 (see Question 2 for more details).

The Communications team on an ongoing basis prioritise links to specific platforms to meet identified demand thus increasing accessibility to relevant programmes and information eg a 'Frontier room' link existed for the C2K teachers online platform to ensure relevant British Council programme information is more easily accessible to all primary and secondary teachers across Northern Ireland.

An alerts communication is emailed to schools outlining upcoming events or programme opportunities, thus capturing a broader audience and increasing participation levels

We measure how people view the quality of our work in three main ways:

- Scores from a customer satisfaction survey distributed both at face-to-face events and online.
- The percentage of people we work with who report gaining new knowledge or skills
- A net promoter score, which is a measure of the willingness of participants to recommend others to work with us or use our services. The net percentage is calculated from advocates minus detractors, in line with standard international practice.

We focussed solely on those customers who have paid for our services, rather than aggregating fee-paying customers with those receiving services for free. We feel this provides a clearer picture and avoids potential distortion of the results. Our customer satisfaction scores showed that a significant majority of our customers agree or strongly agree that our programmes are of high quality.

Our net promoter score of +46 (in line with target) reflects the extent to which our customers would recommend our work to others. Overall our results continue to benchmark well against industry averages.

The percentage of customers reporting gaining new knowledge or skills is high at 87 per cent. Although the customer satisfaction and net promoter

scores are high, there has been a minor drop against these indicators compared to last year. We are analysing customer feedback and conducting research to find out where we might not be meeting expectations. We are, for example, improving payment and refund processes, improving test day experiences for our exams customers, providing more support to enable customers to prepare for tests, improving access to and quality of customer services, and improving the availability of accurate and up-to-date online information.

Source: **Annual Report 2020-21**

https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/annualreport_2020-21.pdf

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2021-22?

Insert number here:

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

No complaints were raised this year.

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The Equality Scheme was reviewed in January 2020 and will run until 2025.

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? (*please provide details*)

- **Monitoring**

1) External: We will continue to monitor our external beneficiaries to identify under-representation. We will expand the scope of those being monitored to include on-off events and our new global programmes. We hope to include a question on socio-economic background to establish whether we are reaching participants from a diverse range of backgrounds. We will continue to find ways to increase the diversity of our participants (see Q2 for more details).

2) Internal: UK wide we are making efforts to reach a target of 100% response rate on online HR portal for staff as well as Northern Ireland Advisory Committee (NIAC) and Board of Trustees to record their personal monitoring data.

- 3) We will continue to monitor the composition of staff in our wider team and implement actions to increase the diversity of staff (see Q2 for more details).

We aim to increase the number of staff with disabilities via our guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants.

Our corporate targets are: 50 per cent women; 15 per cent minority ethnic staff and 7 per cent disabled staff in senior roles.

The Equality Monitoring intranet site contains a new animation about how and why we carry out equality monitoring at the British Council, plus guidance on carrying out equality monitoring, our 12 top tips to consider before embarking on equality monitoring, and links to the latest UK equality monitoring reports and some of the good examples of equality monitoring carried out in different country offices. See all guides here: www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/how-we-work/equality-diversity-inclusion/resources

- **Underrepresentation within protected characteristics**

We will continue to seek to find ways to further increase the underrepresented groups in senior management (women, ethnic minorities and disabled staff).

We will seek to establish contacts with specialist diversity recruiters in Northern Ireland using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This will broaden access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics.

Within the Northern Ireland office specifically, we will seek ways to increase the percentage of ethnic minority staff which is currently low (although this most likely reflect the low percentage in the local population) but this is a group which we could target when recruiting. The age profile of staff should continue to be regularly monitored and ensure there are no barriers to staff in the 51+ age group.

As a means of increasing the number of disabled staff across the organisation, recruitment teams have specifically addressed the issue of broadening access to those with disability by establishing contracts with specialist diversity recruiters (such as Employability, Equal Approach, Diversity Jobs) using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This has broadened access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics. In line with the British Council EDI strategy these efforts shall continue until targets have been met to address areas of under representation and remove any possible barriers to equality of opportunity. By respecting and valuing diversity we are more likely to attract talent and fresh perspectives, nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility and new opportunities and sources of support, so we remain relevant and dynamic and achieve greater reach and impact.

We also consider opportunities for disabled people to work for the British Council Northern Ireland for example through work experience or internship programmes via Disability Action NI. We also hope to 'road test' some of our events with an external disability expert to gain feedback on how we can ensure all our events are accessible.

- **Reasonable Adjustments**

We will continue to record and monitor data on number of reasonable adjustment requests actioned (internally and externally) using the Reasonable Adjustments Log which will continue to enable us to assess the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments made using a formalised approach.

- **Gender & Inclusion**

To address our slightly widened gender pay gap due to fewer women proportionally in senior management and more women proportionally in junior management, the action we will take in the next year is as follows:

- Implement the next phase of talent management and succession planning
- Implement business unit specific action planning in Cultural Engagement and English and Exams
- Investigate why women left senior management in higher numbers and whether this was a one off or part of a wider trend using data from exit interviews
- Investigate whether there are any issues with the way we recruit at junior levels – ie why do we not attract more men at junior level and why is it that those who do apply are less likely to be recruited than a female applicant.
- Look at role profiles to ensure they are accessible and contain inclusive language

- **Diversity Strategy**

We will focus our efforts on maintaining or increasing the Diversity Assessment Framework score of out 5 of 6 indicators. The next deadline for submissions is May 2024.

- **Training & Communications**

- 1) Further staff training has been planned throughout 2022-23. To build on the progress we have made in training staff on the use of BSL, we will run a further refresher course in September 2022 to increase staff's confidence in communicating with people who are deaf or have hearing loss. We also hope to run a session with RNIB on blind awareness. We will also run another gender session for staff, building on the session this year on Gender Equality with our internal gender expert. We will also explore the possibility of running a session on anti-racism/intercultural awareness during the year.
- 2) We will encourage all staff to create an EDI deliverable in their performance portfolio for 2021/22 and find ways to ensure EDI is mainstreamed across the office.

- 3) We will seek ways of further improving communications with staff on EDI updates. An EDI update will continue to form part of our monthly staff meetings and we will meet regularly with leaders of all SBUs in the Northern Ireland office regarding the impact of EDI on their work programmes in order to re-affirm our commitment to and awareness of EDI responsibilities and Section 75 duties.
- 4) We hope to create a dedicated EDI webpage on the Northern Ireland website to showcase our commitment to EDI and good practice examples of our EDI work and its impact.
- 5) We are seeking ways to link up with the Northern Ireland Roma/Traveller community and intend to run a staff talk from an external organisation which specialises in working with this particular community to raise awareness of the barriers they face and how we can make our programmes more inclusive and representative of the wider society in Northern Ireland.

- **Consultation**

We will consider a more focussed consultation strategy via our social media channels and possibly focus groups to groups representing the various categories in Section 75 and will continue to revise our consultation list on a regular basis.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2021-22) reporting period?
(please tick any that apply)

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

5

Fully achieved

1

Partially achieved

Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ			
Regional ^{iv}			
Local ^v	Identified reasonable adjustments requests and recorded them to the reasonable adjustments log to keep a record of any potential barriers to participation for disabled people.		Identified good practice in providing adjustments for disabled people to participate in our programmes eg provision of fridges in students' accommodation to store medication
	Recruited the services of British and Irish sign language interpreters at an online event		Participants with a hearing disability were able to participate in the events

PART B

	Subtitles were provided at all online events		Participants with a hearing disability were able to participate in the events
	All written communication online and delivery of presentations were completed in an accessible format		Participants with disabilities were able to participate in the events
	Documents entitled “Making online meetings more accessible” and “Tips for making slides more accessible” were compiled and shared with staff (see appendices)		Ensured that online meetings and events were as inclusive as possible for disabled participants.
	Investigating opportunities for disabled people to undertake work shadowing or work placements		To be considered in 2022/3

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
	RNID staff training on deaf awareness		Staff developed an awareness of deafness and hearing loss and improved communication skills and confidence when speaking to colleagues and customers who are deaf or have hearing loss
	RNID 3-day sign language training		Staff learned to recognise and apply basic grammatical structures in British Sign Language (BSL), use appropriate greetings, produce their job title/role in BSL and introduce themselves using fingerspelling confidently. A further

PART B

			refresher training course in BSL will be conducted in September 2022.
	Menopause Awareness Session with Equality Commission, ICTU, Labour Relations Agency and case study from Education Authority.		Ensured staff are aware of menopausal symptoms and the provision of reasonable adjustments for staff who require them.
	Wellbeing webinar (May 2021) with Aware NI in association with NI Chest Heart & Stroke Association		Taught skills and techniques to look after staff's mental health, manage feelings when stressed, worried or depressed and help cope with challenges in the workplace and home life.
	JAM Card Training		Staff received online training in how to communicate with JAM Card users - the training included information provision on types of disabilities, real life scenarios of the experiences of JAM card users and quiz style questions. We plan to avail of further advanced disability training through JAM Card in the future.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

PART B

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Time to Talk' days held annually for staff to discuss, share and reflect about mental health and wellbeing and share organisational resources		Increased awareness of organisation's Keep Well Campaign and support offered to staff
2	Celebration of annual international diversity days		Increased awareness of issues facing those from under-represented groups and how we as an organisation can help recognize and address these issues and prevent barriers to participation in our programmes
3	EDI working group with representatives from across various SBUs in the Northern Ireland office.	Increased communication and tighter monitoring of desired outcomes against targets	Facilitate training, communication, mainstreaming and adherence to EDI principles, providing feedback to teams locally on disability and EDI organisational and local issues. Also conduct direct consultation with disabled organisations/disabled people to obtain meaningful feedback.
4	An anti-racism hub was rolled-out globally		All anti-racism and black lives matter resources were consolidated in one accessible space
5	EDI updates at monthly staff meetings		Ensuring EDI is at the forefront of planning of events and ongoing programme activity. Wellbeing updates (addressing mental and physical health of staff) was particularly important during 2020/21.

PART B

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Section 75 training is provided to all new staff at induction stage		Staff are aware of the requirements by law of the Section 75 duties as a public authority
2	The legal monitoring requirements under the Fair Employment Act 1995 were communicated to staff at a presentation by the Equality Manager relating to the results of external monitoring of programme participants		Staff are aware of the requirements by law of the Fair Employment Act 1995 as a public authority
	All grant agreements and contracts contain information on our commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity across all our activities and programmes		All customers are aware of our equality commitment
	The Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan were shared with members of our Northern Ireland Advisory Committee		Advisory Committee members are aware of the requirements of the Equality Scheme

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

PART B

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	The Microsoft Teams EDI folder is accessible to all Northern Ireland staff to access up-to-date information and documentation on all EDI issues including disability and reasonable adjustments		Staff to be equipped with knowledge and information to provide customer service excellence and ensure equality of opportunity through programmes and online events

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestonesvi / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Further develop disability related arts projects such as Unlimited Disability Arts Festival, Bounce Festival and University of Atypical to support disabled and deaf people’s involvement in the arts and facilitate the dissemination of artists’ work to reach UK and international audiences.		Promote positive attitudes towards disabled artists and their work	This is an ongoing arts related activity and dependent on outside agencies and funding.
2	Sign Language training – require refresher training in person		Develop more confidence in sign language	Working from home meant we were only able to roll-out online training.

PART B

				In person training to be implemented in 2022.
3	RNIB blind awareness training		Awareness of the barriers faced by people who are blind or have sign loss and how we can provide reasonable adjustments	Transformation programme within British Council globally meant training had to be postponed.

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

Feedback from staff, Business Disability Forum, Northern Ireland Advisory Committee, recruiting managers, Diversity Unit and HR department.

PART B

(b) Quantitative

Feedback from customers using event and programme equality monitoring and evaluation forms.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

PART B

The Disability Action plan was revised, consulted and submitted to the Equality Commission at the end of 2019.

ⁱ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

ⁱⁱ **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

ⁱⁱⁱ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

^v **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

^{vi} **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.