Diversity and Inclusion

in
Northern Ireland
and
the Wider World

- We can express our cultural identity through:
  - Religion
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Race
  - Language
  - Food
  - Music
  - Dress
  - Festivals and Celebrations
Positive Contribution of Ethnic Minorities in Northern Ireland

- The population in Northern Ireland is changing
- Our community consists of Polish; Chinese; Filipino; Lithuanian; Romanian immigrants for example
- This enriches our community and provides opportunities to become a multi-cultural, tolerant society

Opportunities

- This can help us because it:
  - Promotes tolerance and understanding with communities from different cultures
  - Enriches our community by sharing experiences with different people
  - Generates more money in our economy through the growth of different businesses
  - Increases tax contributions which can pay for Education, Health and Improvements in Northern Ireland
  - Eases a skills shortages – doctors and nurses come here to work in our hospitals

Challenges

- A diverse society can lead to:
  - An increase in racism and community tensions
  - The existence of prejudice and stereotyping
  - An increase in discrimination
  - Pressure on resources and services like housing; hospital waiting lists; language barriers
Understand

- Different expressions of cultural identity can result in division and conflict
  - Racist Attacks and Tensions
  - Stereotyping
  - Sectarianism
  - Prejudice

- People can be treated differently and discriminated against in Northern Ireland because they are from a different country / ethnic minority

Conflict and its resolution without recourse to violence

Definitions:

- **Prejudice** – Intolerance or dislike for people of a particular race, religion, etc.
- **Stereotyping** – this is when you generalise about someone because of the group they belong to e.g. Women can’t drive
- **Sectarianism** – Discrimination, prejudice or unfair treatment based on a person’s religion
- **Racism** – Discrimination, prejudice or unfair treatment based on a person’s race

Dealing with difference to prevent conflict

- Cross-Community groups – working together
- Teach and promote tolerance in schools and institutions in Northern Ireland
- Celebrate traditions and cultures
- Share experiences
- As individuals; as a society; and in government we should be promoting inclusion
Local Issues

- **Sectarianism** – e.g. between Catholics and Protestants
- **Racism** – e.g. Poland v Northern Ireland Match / Romanians forced from homes
- **Prejudice** – e.g. against people based on gender, race, age, disability
- **Stereotyping** – e.g. against different groups – young people; football fans; the elderly

National Issues

- **Sectarianism** – e.g. between Muslims and Christians
- **Racism** – e.g. in the UK against those from Pakistan
- **Prejudice** – e.g. against people based on gender, race, age, disability
- **Stereotyping** – e.g. against different groups – ‘Hoodies’; ‘Chavs’

Global Issues

- **Sectarianism** – e.g. between Muslims and Hindus
- **Racism** – e.g. between people of different skin colour
- **Prejudice** - against people based on gender, race, age, disability
- **Stereotyping** - against different groups – e.g. assuming wrongly that ‘Muslims are all terrorists’
### Sources of Conflict

- Different Religions – Catholic; Protestant; Muslim; Jew; etc.
- Different Political Beliefs – Nationalist; Unionist; Republican; Loyalist; Socialist; Conservative; Liberal
- Different Cultural Practices – Food preparation; wearing traditional clothing
- Different Races
- Different Ethnic Background

### Resolving Conflict

- Mediation – having someone talk to both sides of the conflict e.g. George Mitchell worked as a mediator in Northern Ireland
- Sanctions – blocking trade from a country where there is conflict e.g. trade embargo on Zimbabwe
- Boycotts – not buying products from a country or group

- Judicial System – getting help from police / courts etc
- International Human Rights Instruments – taking someone to the European Court of Human Rights
- United Nations – they can send in Peace Keeping Forces to an area of conflict
Strategies for promoting inclusion – in schools

- More inclusive environment that includes:
  - Special Educational Needs
  - Facilities for those with physical disabilities
  - Working with the Travelling Community
  - Welcoming different Religions
  - Welcoming different Races
  - Creating and implementing an effective Anti-Bullying Policy
  - Teaching Human Rights Law
  - Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

Strategies for promoting inclusion – in the community

- More inclusive environment that includes:
  - Role of Local Councils
  - Community Relations Council
  - Cross Community Projects
  - PSNI / NGOs

Role of Local Councils

- Celebrate a range of traditions and events which welcome all sides of the community e.g.
  - The Chinese New Year
  - St Patrick’s Day
  - The Twelfth of July
  - The Tall Ships
  - The Continental Market
Role of Community Relations Council

- Promote Inclusion in Northern Ireland and offer a range of services
- Promote peace through a range of initiatives and public events
- Work to support victims of the ‘Troubles’ and of sectarianism, racism, stereotyping
- They comment on Community Relations Issues as and when they arise in Northern Ireland

Role of Cross-Community Projects and NGOs

- Work with all sections of the community to promote peace and inclusion
- Arrange events that promote inclusion
- Arrange trips that include children from all sections of the community to promote tolerance
- Work closely with the Community Relations Council and Local Councils to promote inclusion

Role of PSNI

- The PSNI work closely with community groups and political representatives to promote inclusion
- They have employed ‘Positive Discrimination’ strategies to ensure that the Police Force is balanced and includes people from all sections of our community regardless of religion, political opinion, gender, etc
- They can arrest people for breaking the laws which protect our right to inclusion
Strategies for promoting inclusion – in the workplace

- **Fair Employment Legislation** – it is against the law to discriminate against someone on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability etc in the recruitment or promotion of staff
- **Equal Pay** – People should be paid equally for carrying out the same or similar work in a business
- **Equal Opportunities Legislation** – protects the rights of the employee and ensures inclusion in the workplace

What else can be done to promote inclusion?

- Harsher Punishments for excluding others
- Increased funding for schools and community groups would help them organise a wider range of events to promote inclusion in Northern Ireland
- We need to educate the community that being tolerant of other cultures and traditions is the best way for us to live in harmony in this or any other country
- We should be aware that our actions may hurt or cause offence to others

Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Local, National and Global Issues
Social Responsibility – What can the individual / society do?

- Join or support a pressure group
- Voting
- Lobbying MPs
- Organise a petition
- Marching
- Join an NGO
- Volunteer
- Use celebrities
- Propaganda
- Publicity stunts
- Fundraising
- Community Based Activities

Social Responsibility – What can the Government do?

- Communicate – through campaigns the government can encourage the public to take their responsibilities seriously
- Educate – through educating young people in schools the government can encourage us to become involved in tackling social injustice
- Legisl ate – the government can make laws to protect those who are disadvantaged

Why do we need Human Rights?

- Human Rights protect us from:
  - Torture
  - Invasion of Privacy
  - False Imprisonment
  - Injustice
  - Slavery
  - Religious and Political Persecution
Why do we need Human Rights?

- Human Rights ensure that we have:
  - Freedom of speech and expression
  - Equality
  - Justice
  - Privacy
  - Social Security
  - An Education
  - Democracy
  - Cultural Identity

Origins of Human Rights

- **The Magna Carta** was signed in 1215 and gave British landowners the right to have a say in changes to the law that would affect them.
- **The American Declaration of Independence** was signed in 1776 and gave America the right to rule themselves.
- **The Declaration of the Rights of Man** was signed in France in 1789 and gave the people the right to freedom from oppression.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948.
- It was created to prevent the atrocities of World War II happening again.
- The countries that signed the Declaration were saying they would strive to protect the Human Rights of all their citizens.
- Nearly every country in the world has signed the UDHR.
- It is not a law; it is a hope and commitment.
UDHR Article 3: Life, liberty and the security of the person

- **Everyone has the right to life** – This means that we have the right not to be killed by another human being – consider issues such as abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment.

- **Everyone has the right to liberty** – This protects us from unlawful detention

- **Everyone has the right to the security of the person** – This means we have the right to be secure and safe and free from torture

UDHR Article 12: Interference with privacy, family, home correspondence

- This protects our Human Right to privacy

- If the government, a corporation or an individual invades your privacy or interferes with your family or mail this is a violation of your Human Rights

- This may take the form of bugging your phone line, home or business premises or even hacking into your computer

- You could take them to court for a violation of your rights

UDHR Article 21: the right to vote (Proportional Representation)

- This article protects our right to elect people to represent us in local, national and European government

- In Northern Ireland, we vote for Local Councillors; Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs); Members of Parliament (MPs); and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

- In the past some people have been denied the right to vote or have been victims of corrupt elections – this article makes this illegal
UDHR Article 23: the right to work with equal pay for equal work

- This protects our Human Right to find a job to support ourselves and our families
- This Article ensures that we should be paid the same as other people who are doing the same job or a job of equal value to the business
- This Article has been translated into a law in Northern Ireland – The Equal Pay Act 1970

UDHR Article 25: adequate health and well-being for self and family

- This Article protects our Human Right to Healthcare
- In Northern Ireland we are lucky because we have the NHS which provides us with free healthcare
- In other countries this is not the case, however, if you are unemployed or seek benefits in these countries this Article ensures that the government will pay for the healthcare of yourself and your family

UDHR Article 26: free education, at least at elementary, fundamental stage

- This article ensures that all children have the right to a free education at nursery and primary levels
- In the UK education is compulsory until the age of 16
- This article also states that there should be provision for specialist training e.g. apprenticeships
- Further and higher education colleges should also exist to provide citizens with a range of education opportunities
European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR)

- The ECHR was introduced in 1953 and it was inspired by the UDHR.
- This is a legal document.
- If a country has signed the ECHR they have to, in law, protect the Human Rights of all their citizens.
- In the UK if your Human Rights are being violated you can either have your case heard in a UK court or at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in France.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

- In 1991 the UK Government signed the UNCRC.
- The UNCRC protects the Human Rights of children and young people until the age of 18.
- The Government works with The Department of Education in Northern Ireland; the PSNI and DHSS to ensure that your rights are protected.

The Role of the Government in Protecting Human Rights

- **Communicate** – the government can communicate Human Rights standards to the public through leaflets and advertising.
- **Educate** – the government can educate young people in schools about Human Rights standards in Citizenship classes.
- **Legislate** - the government has a responsibility to ensure that Human Rights standards are enshrined in the law of the land and that all new laws are in line with the ECHR.
The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

- The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) is an independent, statutory organisation
- It was established by Parliament through the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and started its work on 1 March 1999
- The Commission is recognised as a member of the worldwide network of National Human Rights Institutions
- They help protect and promote the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland

They work to ensure that your human rights are protected by:
- advising government on its obligation to uphold human rights
- reviewing law and practice to make sure they are in line with human rights standards
- putting forward proposals for new laws such as a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
- investigating matters of concern such as prison conditions, mental health care and racism
- promoting an awareness of human rights in, for example, schools and the police service
- taking cases to court to highlight alleged human rights abuses
- working with other organisations to promote human rights in Northern Ireland

What does this mean for you?

- As a child, you have specific Human Rights regarding things like education, safety and protection from cruelty and all of your rights are protected
- As an adult, your Human Rights are protected in the ECHR and all laws in Northern Ireland must comply with International Human Rights Law
- If your Human Rights are violated you can take the perpetrator to court
Limiting Human Rights

- In some cases it is necessary to limit the Human Rights of some people to protect others in our society.
- Some people see CCTV as a violation of Human Rights, but it is there to protect the general public from crime.
- A criminal might have limited Human Rights because they have broken the law.
- Their freedom may be reduced slightly through curfews or significantly due to a prison sentence.
- Their letters may be read by Prisoner Officers for the protection of others.

The Balance between Rights and Responsibilities

- We all have Human Rights, however, with these Rights comes Responsibility.
- We all have a responsibility to protect and respect the rights of others in our family, school and community.
- We are responsible for our own actions and must be aware that if we violate someone else’s Human Rights we could face charges / fines / prison.

The Role of Society and Government in Safeguarding Human Rights
**Laws Relating to Equal Opportunities**

- Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (amended 1984)
- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (amended 1988)
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
- Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Northern Ireland Act 1998

**Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (amended 1984)**

- Applies to men and women
- You are entitled to have the same pay as someone else who is doing the same or similar work within your place of business
- You are also entitled to the same conditions such as sick pay; holidays and bonuses

**Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (amended 1988)**

- You can’t discriminate against someone because of their gender (male or female) in the following areas:
  - Employment
  - Training
  - Provision of goods
  - Provision of facilities
  - Provision of services
Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

- You can not discriminate against someone because of:
  - their colour
  - their race
  - ethnic origin
  - national origin
- This is in any area of employment; housing; health etc

Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

- You can not discriminate against someone because of:
  - their religious beliefs
  - their political opinion
- You can not discriminate against someone because of:
  - their supposed religious beliefs
  - their supposed political opinion

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

- You can not discriminate against someone because they have a disability e.g.
  - Housing
  - Employment
  - Access to Services
- All businesses have to ensure that they have disability access to their premises and within their premises
Northern Ireland Act 1998

- This Act includes Section 75 which protects our equal rights and ensures that the government run agencies promote equality between:
  - Men and women
  - People with and without disabilities
  - People with different religious beliefs, political opinions, race, age, sexuality, marital status
  - People with or without dependants

Equality Versus Fairness

- Is treating someone fairly the same as treating someone equally?
  - No it isn’t. Sometimes you have to treat people differently to make sure they are being treated fairly
  - For example, you might have to help a homeless person get a house so they are being treated fairly and the same as others
  - This is called ‘Positive Discrimination’

Gender

- Some people are treated poorly because of their gender
  - Although it is usually women that face discrimination because of their gender it also happens to men
  - In industry, some women are paid less than men for doing the same or similar work
Race

- Some people face discrimination because they are from a different race or ethnic minority
- Often people accuse ethnic minorities of 'stealing our jobs and houses' but the fact is they are doing jobs people from Northern Ireland do not want
- They face many problems

Race – Problems faced by Refugees

- finding suitable accommodation
- finding a job where they are not exploited and paid less than the minimum wage
- adjusting to life in a different country with different weather, cultures and traditions
- being able to afford to live here and support family back home
- language barrier / communicating
- finding a school for their children
- dealing with racist attacks / comments etc

Sexuality

- Some people face discrimination because of their sexuality – Heterosexual / Homosexual / Bisexual
- This may take the form of refusing someone employment, housing, or access to services because of their sexuality
- It is important that we do not judge someone on the basis of their sexuality
Causes of Discrimination

- Ignorance
- Family beliefs: e.g. brought up to be intolerant
- Peer Pressure
- Think it is fun to hurt someone
- Thinking you are superior or better than others
- Hatred for others

Effects of Discrimination

- Hurt for the victim / victims
- Depression
- Loneliness
- Inferiority Complex
- Fear in the community / workplace
- Hatred towards the perpetrators
- Crime e.g. violence / revenge against the perpetrators

Section 75 – Northern Ireland Act 1998

- In 1998 the Northern Ireland Act became a law
- This gave us the Northern Ireland Assembly which gave our politicians the power to make decisions for us
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act deals with equality in Northern Ireland
- It makes sure that all agencies promote and protect our right to equality
The Reason Section 75 Exists

- Section 75 was written into the Belfast Agreement to ensure that all people in Northern Ireland, regardless of their age, sexuality, gender, race, ability etc would be treated equally and fairly.

- It was essential that the Agreement looked beyond just the Catholics and Protestant issues in Northern Ireland and realised that we are now living in a multi-cultural society.

Section 75 (S75)

- A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity—
  (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
  (b) between men and women generally;
  (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and
  (d) between persons with dependants and persons without.

Section 75 (S75)

- Section 75 protects the rights of all citizens in Northern Ireland.

- It means that if you weren’t receiving the same treatment and rights as someone else you could go to court to have your case heard.

- Remember that you are protected by the law and you shouldn’t allow anyone to treat you unfairly.
The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Their role is to advance equality, promote equality of opportunity, encourage good relations and challenge discrimination through promotion, advice and enforcement.

If you feel your rights are being denied you can speak to the Equality Commission and they will support you in court.

General duties include:
- working towards the elimination of discrimination
- promoting equality of opportunity and encouraging good practice
- promoting affirmative/positive action
- promoting good relations between people of different racial groups
- overseeing the implementation and effectiveness of the statutory duty on public authorities
- keeping the relevant legislation under review

Some of their recent campaigns include:
- Disability Transport
- Equality for All 09/10
- Anti-Racist Workplace Week 09
- Traveller Focus Week 2009
Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Role and Contribution of NGOs
- NGO stands for Non-Governmental Organisation
- They do not receive any money or support from the government so have to do their own fundraising
- They are basically charities that deal with social injustices
- They have a significant role to play in helping reduce social injustices throughout the world

Case Studies - NGOs
- Amnesty International
- Friends of the Earth
- Oxfam
- Save the Children
- War on Want
Key Democratic Institutions and their Role in Promoting Inclusion, Justice and Democracy

What is Democracy?

- The word ‘Democracy’ comes from the Greek words ‘Demos’ meant common people and ‘Kratos’ meant strength or power.
- So democracy literally means the power or strength of the people.
- A democratic organisation / country is one in which ordinary people have the power to influence how things are run.
- Democracy is often associated with freedom and rights e.g. the right to vote.

Two Types of Democracy

- **Direct Democracy**
  - This is when each person casts their vote.
  - In Switzerland and a number of States in America have referenda and town meetings so that everyone has their say.
  - In 1997 people in Northern Ireland had a direct say in the Good Friday Agreement with 71% of those who voted in favour.

- **Representative Democracy**
  - This is when we elect someone to act on our behalf e.g. an Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), Member of Parliament (MP), Member of the European Parliament (MEP) or a local councillor.
Are all societies democratic?

- Most countries are democratic, but there are still some countries where people do not have the same rights and freedoms we have in NI.
- Some states are dictatorships like Zimbabwe – one leader holds the power.
- There are also differences between democracies – not all have presidents.

Left Wing and Right Wing

- Communist (Communist Party)
- Socialist (Labour Party / Nationalists)
- Liberal (Lib Dems)
- Conservative (Conservative Party / Unionists)
- Fascist (Nazis)

School Democracy

- School Council – Influence decisions made about pupils regarding issues such as uniform, facilities etc.
- Class Captains / Prefects – how are they chosen at the start of the year?
What makes a society democratic?

Constitution

Right to Criticise Parliament

Party System

Elections

- Citizens voice their opinions through elections. The government can listen to public opinion
- Elections normally take place every 3-4 years (regular)
- There must be a range of candidates (free)
- Local Elections – to elect people to represent the public at a local level in Council Meetings (Belfast City Council)
- Assembly Elections – to elect people to represent the public at the Northern Ireland Assembly (Parliament Buildings, Stormont)
- General Elections – to elect people to represent the public at a national level (Westminster, London)

Party System

- Political parties are groups of people who campaign in elections to represent the public in government
- These people share the same ideas and beliefs on different subjects / issues
Parliament

- Parliament is where parties discuss and make laws
- UK – House of Commons / House of Lords
- Republic of Ireland – Dáil / Senate
- USA – House of Representatives / Senate
- The Northern Ireland Assembly is the Regional Parliament for Northern Ireland
- Wales also has an Assembly
- Scotland has their own Parliament

Head of State

- In a Republic such as the Republic of Ireland and USA the Head of State is the President (Currently, President Mary McAleese and President Barack Obama)
- In the UK it is the Monarch (Currently, Queen Elizabeth II)

Prime Minister

- The Prime Minister of a country is usually the leader of the party that win the most seats in an election
- Not all countries have a Prime Minister
- The current Prime Minister of the UK is David Cameron, the Leader of the Conservative Party
Constitution

- A constitution is a set of rules about how a country is to be run.
- This may include rules on voting, elections, rights and powers.
- You will have heard of the American Constitution in films and on television.
- Surprisingly, the UK is one of the few countries that doesn’t have a written constitution.

Democratic

- In a Democratic society, citizens can voice their opinions.
- You have the right to protest and campaign on different issues.
- The media can print their opinions (Freedom of the Press).
- Many democracies have a Bill of Rights to protect their citizens.

Non-Democratic

- In a non-democratic society, e.g., Zimbabwe, the citizens cannot voice their opinions without the possibility of consequences.
- The people cannot campaign openly.
- Elections are controlled.
- The rights of the people may be denied.
- The Press is controlled by the state.
Power

- Power is a responsibility which leaders try to use wisely
- Most people accept their government as the legitimate holders of power
- Institutions of law are usually accepted – Police and Courts

Majority Democracy

Consensus Democracy
The local councils collect property tax known as Rates from Homeowners and Businesses to pay for all the facilities they provide.

They also receive money from the government.

They can raise money by charging people to use facilities like leisure centres and for organised events.

The Northern Ireland Assembly

- First and Deputy First Minister
- Minister for Employment and Learning
- Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Minister of Enterprise Trade and Investment
- Minister of Education
- Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- Minister for Regional Development
- Minister of Finance and Personnel
- Minister of the Environment
- Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Minister for Social Development

The Role of the First and Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland

- The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is a fully functioning Department of the Northern Ireland administration with a wide range of responsibilities.
- The objectives of the department include:
  - supporting Ministers and the institutions of government;
  - building a programme for government;
  - promoting better community relations, a culture of equality and rights;
  - and targeting social need and promoting social inclusion.
Ministers and Junior Ministers (OFMDFM)

- First Minister – Peter Robinson, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
- Deputy First Minister – Martin McGuinness Sinn Fein (SF)
- Junior Minister – Robert Newton Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
- Junior Minister – Gerry Kelly Sinn Fein (SF)

The OFMDFM have responsibility for:

- Support for the Executive and liaison with the Assembly, the North-South Ministerial Council, British-Irish Council, Civic Forum and UK Departments; international relations; Programme for Government and the Executive’s economic policies; promoting and monitoring implementation of equality of opportunity/good relations, tackling poverty and social exclusion, children and young people, victims and survivors, sustainable development; Review of Public Administration; Information Service; emergency planning; improving investment in infrastructure and the Statutory Publications Office.

The Executive Committee

- The Executive Committee is like the Cabinet in the Westminster Parliament
- As you can see from the previous diagram, it has a First Minister, a Deputy First Minister and 10 Ministers who are each in charge of a particular government department
- These posts are given out using the d'Hondt system which is linked to the number of seats the party won in the election
- The ministers can be excluded from office if they don’t follow the Code of Conduct and pledge of office
History of the Northern Ireland Assembly

- The Assembly is the main law-making institution in the regional government.
- It was set up in 1999 after the Good Friday Agreement was signed by the politicians.
- Each constituency have 6 elected representatives.
- There are 18 constituencies so that makes 108 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

How does the Northern Ireland Assembly work?

- The 108 MLAs meet in the main chamber every Monday and Tuesday for Plenary sessions which can involve debates, law-making and voting on issues.
- There is also ministerial question time.
- A Speaker controls the meetings.
- The Assembly has control over a range of areas such as health, education and agriculture.
- The Assembly has no control over national issues like defence, foreign policy or taxation.

Committees

- There are ten of these and they have powers of Scrutiny, Policy, Legislation.
- There are six of these and they deal with finance, procedures, Assembly Business, audit and public accounts.
- Temporary Committees set up to deal with an issue such as flags, proceeds of crime or compensation.
Is the Assembly fair?

- Single Transferable Vote – means there is a range of political parties
- Assembly Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs are divided equally using the d'Hondt system
- Cross Community consent required on issues

Is the Assembly fair?

- 30 representatives can petition for an issue to be discussed and dealt with
- All laws made must be in line with ECHR and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission check that they are fair
- The public and media can go into the plenary chamber and every word said in the Assembly is recorded by Hansard and published daily

How laws are made

- Idea – Minister or individual MLA or Assembly Committee proposes a change in the law
- First Stage – the speaker arranges the Bill’s introduction to the Assembly and sends a copy to the Human Rights Commission
- Second Stage – A general debate on the Bill where members can vote on its general principles
- Committee Stage – the appropriate Statutory Committee scrutinises the Bill and prepares a report proposing any changes
- Consideration Stage – the content of the Bill including proposed amendments are considered and voted upon
- Final Stage – the last opportunity for MLAs to debate the bill and vote to either pass or reject it
- Assent – Speaker asks the Secretary of State to seek Royal Assent
- End the Bill becomes an Act (law)
Other Institutions

Institutions Introduced under the Belfast Agreement
- The Civic Forum
- The British-Irish Council / Council of the Isles
- The British Inter-Governmental Conference
- The North-South Ministerial Council

What does the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement mean for me?
- We have people from Northern Ireland representing our views and issues and making decisions about Northern Ireland
- We are ruling ourselves
- We are not being controlled by Westminster or Politicians that do not live here
- Our Equality and Human Rights are Protected

Key Issues in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement
- It set out a plan for devolved government in Northern Ireland on a stable and inclusive basis
- Provided for the creation of The Human Rights Commission and The Equality Commission
- The early release of terrorist prisoners
- The decommissioning of paramilitary weapons
- Reforms of criminal justice and policing
Westminster

- Every four to five years, Northern Ireland elects 18 MPs to sit in the House of Commons
- The UUP, DUP, SDLP and Sinn Fein each have MPs
- Sinn Fein have never taken their seats in Westminster and have only recently begun to use their offices there
- The Unionists tend to vote with the Conservatives and the Nationalists tend to vote with the Labour Party

The Secretary of State

- The Northern Ireland Secretary of State is the British Government representative in Northern Ireland and voices Northern Ireland issues in Westminster
- If Stormont is suspended the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Office are responsible for all Government work
- He / She is responsible for matters not under the remit of the Devolved Government
- Until 2010 these included policing, criminal justice, law and order and prisons

Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic

- The British Monarchy is head of the Government, the judiciary and the armed forces
- The Northern Ireland Assembly has no tax-raising powers and relies on funding from Westminster
- Taoiseach and UK Prime Ministers have driven the process and made many important announcements during the Peace Process
How can you influence political decisions?

- The elderly, unemployed, poor and young people are less likely to vote
- To vote you must be registered in your local constituency and produce photographic ID
- There are different types of voting systems

What do Political Parties do?

- Citizens vote for politicians to speak on their behalf
- Northern Ireland has a number of political parties
- They fall into three categories – Unionist (including Loyalist), Nationalist (including Republican) and Non-Aligned
- Unionists (including Loyalist) want to keep the link with Britain – mainly Protestant
- Nationalists (including Republican) want to be part of the Republic of Ireland – mainly Catholic

What do Political Parties do?

- The politicians will represent our views on a range of issues
- Each Party will have their own thoughts on these issues and will communicate these with voters when they are campaigning during election time
- They will write their ideas and plans in a Manifesto
How can you influence political decisions?

- Pressure groups are also known as interest groups
- They try to influence government
- They usually form around a single issue like environment, rights, anti-war campaigners
- Local examples include: The Simon Community and Trocaire

Lobbying

- The entrance hall in the Houses of Parliament is known as the Central Lobby
- Lobbying is when you meet an MP to ask them to represent your opinions in Parliament
- Some Pressure Groups employ professional lobbyists

Civil Disobedience

- Breaking the law in a non-violent protest e.g. stopping road construction
- Refusing to pay taxes
- Recently there was discussion about refusal to pay water charges in Northern Ireland
Direct Action

- Extreme Protest – uses violence
- Animal Rights activists often resort to this tactic
- Sabotage is another tactic
- Can gain publicity but can have a negative impact on innocent people