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*Cork Education and  
Training Board*

# PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY ON EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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# INTRODUCTION

This implementation plan establishes the ambition, approach, and steps being taken by Cork ETB to implement the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Duty), across all of our function areas.

The Duty requires public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights for service users, policy beneficiaries, and employees, across all function areas.

Public bodies are required to:

- undertake an assessment of the equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups for the Duty that are relevant to their functions;
- identify the steps being taken or proposed to address these issues; and
- report annually on progress in addressing these issues and implementing the Duty.

The identified groups for the Duty are:<sup>1</sup>

- groups covered by the nine protected grounds under equality legislation: gender (including transgender people and people transitioning to their true gender); civil status; family status (including lone parents and people with caring responsibilities); age; disability (including mobility, sensory, and intellectual disabilities, mental health issues, and chronic illness); sexual orientation; race (including skin colour, nationality and ethnic origin); religion; and membership of the Traveller community; and
- groups covered by the ground of socio-economic status, who are at risk of or experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2019.



**OUR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
VALUES STATEMENT**

## OUR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS VALUES

Respect  
Inclusion  
Empowerment  
Participation  
Independence

In our equality and human rights statement, we have defined each of these values and established benchmarks concretising each of them in:

- a statement of priority – establishing the implications of the value for the change we seek to contribute to as an organisation; and
- a statement of process – establishing the implications of the value for the way we work in pursuing this change.

# OUR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS VALUES STATEMENT

## RESPECT

**Respect** is about fairness and dignity. It involves freedom from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

**Statement of Priority:** Cork ETB strives to be an organisation that embodies fairness and dignity, where the diversity of learners, staff and communities can trust and have faith in each other.

**Statement of Process:** Cork ETB works in a manner that ensures the diversity of learners, staff and communities are treated with fairness, dignity, and empathy, within a space where they feel safe.

## INCLUSION

**Inclusion** is about understanding, recognition, and appreciation of diversity. It involves openness in responding to the different needs that emerge from this diversity.

**Statement of Priority:** Cork ETB strives to achieve and contribute to the highest level of engagement of the diversity of learners, staff and communities in all its operations at all levels.

**Statement of Process:** Cork ETB works in a manner that actively fosters and promotes an appreciation of diversity; and is flexible in dismantling barriers and responding to specific needs that can arise for this diversity of learners, staff and communities.

## EMPOWERMENT

**Empowerment** is about the diversity of people having a voice, being listened to, and being part of decision-making processes. It involves supporting this diversity of people to engage with these decision-making processes.

**Statement of Priority:** Cork ETB strives, through its education, to be a driver for the diversity of people to have a say in decision-making and to promote wider opportunities for this to happen.

**Statement of Process:** Cork ETB works in a manner that provides opportunities for the opinions of the diversity of learners, staff and communities to be heard; opens up two-way communication channels to support this to happen; and promotes the confidence and resilience necessary for effective engagement.

## PARTICIPATION

**Participation** is about the diversity of people achieving equal outcomes in employment, education and other fields. It involves positive actions and growth-enabling experiences that can make a positive difference.

**Statement of Priority:** Cork ETB strives to enable the diversity of learners, staff and communities to reach their full potential and to contribute fully in their chosen fields.

**Statement of Process:** Cork ETB works in a manner that actively engages with and opens up access and progression routes for the diversity of learners, staff and communities.

## INDEPENDENCE

**Independence** is about having agency, options, and choices. It involves the freedom to express and pursue preferences.

**Statement of Priority:** Cork ETB strives to create a range of options for the diversity of learners, staff and communities to have real choices.

**Statement of Process:** Cork ETB works in a manner that provides choices, supports preferences, and enables the diversity of learners, staff and communities to navigate options and make informed choices.



**▶ ASSESSMENT OF EQUALITY AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**





## INTRODUCTION

This assessment identifies equality and human rights issues facing groups identified for the Duty, that are relevant to the functions of Cork ETB. These relate to the:

- Situation of the group, in terms of their access to resources and any particular disadvantage they experience;
- Experience of the group, in terms of the quality of their interaction with employers and service providers and the wider society; and
- Identity of the group, in terms of how they chose to give expression to their identity and the failure to meet the specific needs that arise from this.

The functions of Cork ETB are: provision of education and training services; development and provision of support systems for learners; planning for schools and other centres of provision, and for youth services; funding and supporting informal education initiatives, including oversight and monitoring; employer engagement; corporate services; procurement, buildings and estates; finance; human resources; IT; and acting under the aegis of the relevant Government Departments in relation to infrastructure, supports and services

The equality and human rights values identified by Cork ETB provide the framework to set out the equality and human rights issues assessed as relevant: respect; inclusion; empowerment; participation; and independence.

The equality and human rights issues identified relate to all of the identified groups unless otherwise indicated.

# ASSESSMENT OF EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

This assessment recognises and includes the specific oppressions of racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, sectarianism, sexism, and ageism.

## RESPECT

*Respect is about fairness and dignity. It involves freedom from bullying, harassment and discrimination.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Cork ETB, are:

- Discrimination and the expectation of discrimination, at the individual and the institutional levels, including:
  - in the fields of employment and education provision across the identified groups
  - specific issues of pregnancy related discrimination
  - specific issues of discrimination against those transitioning their gender identity
- Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse, including:
  - in public settings and online
  - in the workplace and in education settings
  - leading to people feeling unsafe and isolated
  - leading to unwelcoming environments where people feel they have to hide their identity
  - gender based violence
- Prejudice and stereotyping:

- leading to false assumptions about and inadequate decision-making in relation to people
- leading to lack of respect and dignity
- leading to internalised stigma
- Segregated educational settings arising from systemic issues and ‘soft’ barriers, including for example:
  - on the socio-economic status ground, for migrants, for people with disabilities, and on the religion ground.
- Lack of knowledge about rights and relevant legislation among service providers and employers and failure to build staff capacity or educate a wider public in this regard
- Lack of knowledge about rights and capacity to exercise rights in relation to discrimination and harassment among people from the identified groups, and lack of information provision in this regard leading to under-reporting of discrimination
- Lack of privacy, of protection for personal information and of confidentiality

## INCLUSION

*Inclusion is about understating, recognition and appreciation of diversity. It involves openness in responding to the different needs that emerge from this diversity.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Cork ETB, are:

- Lack of universal design of physical infrastructure, IT systems, organisational systems and programmes, and learning systems and environments, for accessibility across the identified groups
- Lack of adaptability and flexibility, lack of supports and resources to address specific needs, and expectations that people fit into existing systems, including:

- Making reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities
- Recognising and taking into account the practical implications of cultural difference
- Addressing and responding appropriately to the diversity of sexual identities and gender identities
- Addressing and responding appropriately to language diversity
- Addressing and responding appropriately to literacy issues
- Lack of flexible working provision and supports for those with caring responsibilities, and lack of take-up by men of flexible working arrangements available
- Lack of systems to establish and respond to specific needs of people from the identified groups
- Invisibility for diversity, including:
  - Lack of focus on diversity and identified groups in educational curricula
  - Lack of visibility for diversity in workplace and service provision settings
  - Lack of data collection and analysis rendering groups invisible, in particular including: Black and minority ethnic people, including Travellers and Roma, and LGBTI+ people
  - Lack of resources for and promotion of Black and minority ethnic cultures, including Traveller culture
  - Feeling one has to hide one's identity for fear of negative consequences, including lack of disclosure of identity by people with disabilities, and barriers to coming out for LGBTI+ people
- Lack of awareness and knowledge among management and staff in organisations and among service users that engage with that organisational space, about diversity and the particular needs that arise for the identified groups and for those at the intersections between these groups, and lack of policies and procedures in relation to these issues.

## EMPOWERMENT

*Empowerment is about the diversity of people having a voice, being listened to, and being part of decision-making processes. It involves supporting this diversity of people to engage with these decision-making processes.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Cork ETB, are:

- Not being listened to, not being heard, lack of opportunity to make one's point, and fear of speaking out
- Lack of presence in positions of power
- Lack of presence in organisational structures for decision-making and consultation
- Lack of representative organisations and lack of engagement with representative organisations
- Lack of literacy, confidence, skills, resources and lack of availability of supports required to engage in consultation and to participate in decision-making systems

## PARTICIPATION

*Participation is about the diversity of people achieving equal outcomes in employment, education and other fields. It involves positive actions and growth-enabling experiences that can make a positive difference.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Cork ETB, are:

- Unemployment, underemployment, precarious employment, and lack of employment, including:
  - Black and minority ethnic people, including Roma and Travellers, people with disabilities, young people, and those covered by the socio-economic status ground
- Lack of progression in employment and into employment, including:
  - Travellers and Roma, people with disabilities, women, and those covered by the socio-economic status ground
- Lack of participation in apprenticeships, including:
  - Women, older people, and Black and minority ethnic people including Roma and Travellers
- Educational disadvantage, low levels of educational outcomes and high levels of school dropout and early school leaving, including:
  - Black and minority ethnic people, including Roma and Travellers, people with disabilities, LGBTI+ people, and those covered by the socio-economic status ground
  - over-representation in fields of study with lower potential in terms of labour market outcomes, and associated issues of lack of access to guidance
  - lack of pathways to further education for those without the requisite national qualifications
- Digital inequality and lack of digital literacy, skills, resources, and equipment, in particular including:
  - Travellers and Roma, older people, and those covered by the socio-economic status ground
- Poverty and financial barriers, in particular including:
  - Black and minority ethnic people, including Travellers and Roma, and those covered by the socio-economic status ground
  - People with disabilities, including in terms of the additional cost of disability
  - Low income of those covered by the socio-economic status ground and predominance of women in low paid jobs
  - Gender pay and pension gaps

- Barriers due to lack of transport, in particular including:
  - Older people and disabled people
- Barriers due to lack of an adequate caring infrastructure, in particular including:
  - Lack of affordable and accessible childcare
  - Lack of action to address the unequal sharing of caring and unpaid work between women and men
  - Inappropriate responsibilities accorded to young carers and barriers that result from these
  - Lack of supports for people with caring responsibilities other than childcare
  - Lack of paid leave for men with caring responsibilities and lack of take up by men of paid leave that is available
- Inadequate response to levels of emotional and behavioural problems and to mental health issues, in particular including:
  - Young people, Travellers, and Trans people
- Over-representation of some groups in prison, including Travellers, and inadequate provision for some groups in prison, including women and Trans people
- Lack of effective positive action and barriers to positive action
- Lack of role models and of peer support, and low levels of expectation

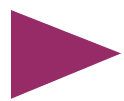
## INDEPENDENCE

*Independence is about having agency, options, and choices. It involves the freedom to express and pursue preferences.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this benchmark and relevant to the functions of Cork ETB, are:

- Lack of choices, including due to
  - Financial barriers
  - Legal status and eligibility for supports and services
  - Lack of recognition for foreign qualifications
  - Lack of information and support on assisted decision-making for people with disabilities
  - Low level of expectations held by and about people from the identified groups
- Lack of provision of a variety in options, pathways and opportunities
- Lack of information provided and knowledge about options, pathways and opportunities
- Not seeing the different options available due to low levels of confidence, limited ambitions, and traditions





## ENABLING IMPLEMENTATION



# LEADERSHIP

## LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

The SMT will take steps to: familiarise itself with the Duty and its requirements; review the progress made in its implementation; ensure resources are in place for its implementation; give expression to and bring attention to our equality and human rights values; and give strategic leadership for its implementation. The Duty will be an item on the agenda for SMT meetings twice yearly.

The wider management groups will act to: familiarise themselves with the Duty and its requirements; discuss, enable and accord responsibility for the steps required for its ongoing implementation; give expression to and bring attention to our equality and human rights values; and give operational leadership for its implementation. The Duty will be an item on the agenda for wider management group meetings twice yearly.

The Duty and its implementation and impact will be on the agenda for Board of Management meetings in the schools twice yearly.

The Duty and its implementation, and realising our ambitions for the Duty, will be on the agenda of Planning and Progress Review Meetings organised during the year. This will further inform learning from our implementation of the Duty.

Immediate responsibility within CETB in relation to organising for the implementation of the Duty rests with the Corporate Services department.

## WORKING GROUP

Corporate Services convene a Duty Working Group to champion, plan for, and drive implementation of the Duty. The Duty Working Group is cross-organisational in its composition.

The responsibilities of the Duty Working Group include to:

- prepare an annual action plan to enable implementation of the Duty and to implement the Duty;
- track, support and monitor progress on implementation of this action plan;
- prepare templates to support the measurement or tracking of outcomes from the Duty and the actions taken on equality and human rights issues;

- develop tools, as useful, to support an integration of the Duty into the existing processes and systems of CETB;
- share the learning across the organisation from the implementation of the Duty;
- prepare an annual report on the progress made in its implementation; and
- review and update the Equality and Human Rights Values Statement and the Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues.

## CAPACITY

Training and guidance on the Duty will be provided for those with responsibility for the development and review of plans, internal policies, external strategies, and programmes; and, as part of this responsibility, for implementing the Address step of the Duty.

Budgetary resources will be made available for the actions identified as required and possible to address the equality and human rights issues assessed as relevant.

Guidance on, familiarisation with, and learning from the ongoing implementation of the Duty will be made available on an ongoing basis to all staff.

## COMMUNICATION

Progress on equality and human rights issues and in implementing the Duty will be highlighted and celebrated across all strands in the organisation.

Internal and external communications, including through our communications strategy, will seek to achieve an ongoing focus on the Equality and Human Rights Values Statement.

The internal communications platform will include a focus on our equality and human rights values. Internal campaigns, events hosted, and reports produced by Cork ETB will engage relevant equality and human rights values.

Initiatives will be taken to engage learners, staff and communities with our equality and human rights values. Our learners' charter, customer service charter,

and other similar standards will, over time, be developed to include a focus on our equality and human rights values. The practice of our schools in marking calendar events to celebrate and promote equality and diversity will be mirrored across the organisation as a means of engaging our equality and human rights values.

## CONSULTATION

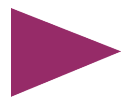
The structures and mechanisms for a participative approach to our implementation of the Duty will be developed and evolved over time. These will include engagement with civil society organisations representative of the identified groups for the Duty.

## MONITORING PROGRESS

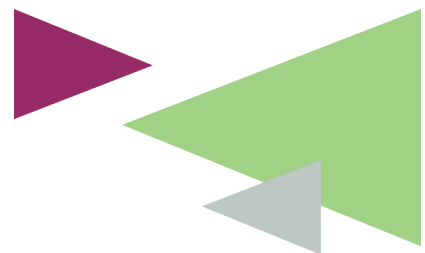
A template will be developed and applied across all parts of the organisation to keep track of our ongoing implementation of the Duty and of the impact achieved through this on the equality and human rights issues assessed as relevant.

The Duty Working Group will collate the completed templates as part of its annual report on the implementation of the Duty and the progress made in addressing the equality and human rights issues.

Data systems within the organisation will be kept under review with a view to strengthening, where possible, the collection of equality data.



## ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION



## THE ADDRESS STEP

The 'address' step of the Duty is its core ongoing element. It is implemented as part of the development and/or review of plans, internal policies, strategies, and programmes.

At the commencement of the development or review process:

- Review the assessment of equality and human rights issues to establish those equality and human rights issues that are relevant to the particular plan, internal policy, strategy, or programme.
- Gather the data and information available in relation to the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant.
- Review the equality and human rights values statement to extract the relevant statements of priority or statements of process.
- Include this material in any brief for the development or review process.

In implementing the development or review process:

- Include an examination of the relevant equality and human rights issues in any evaluation or contextual review conducted for the plan, internal policy, strategy, and programme.
- Transmit the obligations under the Duty to any external consultants contracted and ensure they are fully briefed in this regard.
- Track the relevant equality and human rights issues, and allocate budgets and responsibilities, to ensure they are addressed during the development or review process, and ensure there is an alignment with the relevant values and their statement of priority or statement of process as appropriate.

At final draft stage of the development or review process:

- Convene a meeting of relevant staff to check:
  - Does the draft adequately and appropriately take up and address each of the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant?
  - Does the draft adequately and appropriately progress the statement of priority/statement of process for each of the relevant values?

- Does the draft include any provision that might run counter to our equality and human rights values or to an effective response to the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant?
- Conduct a participative exercise, for initiatives of scale, with the Duty Working Group and, as appropriate, with civil society organisations representative of the identified groups to check that the equality and human rights issues are adequately and appropriately identified and addressed.

After the development or review process:

- Establish and implement systems to track progress on the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant.
- Report annually on progress made in addressing the equality and human rights issues and advancing the statement of priority/statement of process as appropriate for each of our equality and human rights values.
- Use this report to reflect on this progress and to strengthen the plan, programme, policy or procedure as found to be necessary.

## KEY MOMENTS AND PROCEDURES

The strategy statement of Cork ETB will establish how the commitment to implementing the Duty is to be progressed and will include reference to and links to the assessment of equality and human rights issues and the implementation plan for the Duty.

Implementation of the Duty within CETB will grow and evolve over time and will be implemented in a manner that is integral to CETB processes and systems.

Key moments that will be a focus for implementing the Address step of the Duty, the ongoing element of the Duty, are the:

- development of plans, internal policies, strategies, and programmes.
- review of plans, internal policies, strategies, and programmes.

These key moments include development or review of such as: Annual Service Plans; the FET strategy; school plans; people strategies; internal policies and procedures; supporting strategies; and application of the National Quality Standards Framework to youth services and disability services projects.

Key procedures that will be a focus for implementing the Address step of the Duty are:

- Grant making and SLA templates; and
- Procurement.

## REPORTING

The annual report from each Board of Management for schools will address progress made in implementing the Duty and the outcomes from this.

FET annual reports and reports from centres will address progress made in implementing the Duty and the outcomes from this.

The Annual Report of Cork ETB will outline progress made in implementing the Duty and in addressing the equality and human rights. Reference and link to a more detailed report could be included as found to be necessary.

## INDICATIVE ACTION PLAN 2023

This implementation plan will be presented to the SMT for discussion, finalisation, and approval.

Steps to enable implementation of the Duty in 2023 will include:

- Ongoing responsibility and work of the Duty working group to drive implementation of the Duty within CETB, including the identification of contact points for the Duty as found to be required.
- Familiarisation sessions on the Duty and this implementation plan with the various leadership structures across CETB.
- A focus on the Duty and this implementation plan as part of the annual conference.
- Communication about the Duty and this implementation plan and on progress made during the year, as part of internal communications.



- Training session for staff responsible for the key moments/key procedures that are a focus for the Duty in 2023, to upskill them on implementing the Address step of the Duty.

The key moments and/or key procedures that will be a focus for implementing the address step of the Duty in 2023 will be explored and identified with the Directors of FET, Schools, and OSD. Indicatively, four key moments will be identified.

Indicative key moments include: review and development of customer service action plan, and the service requirements process for youth services.





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