

# Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

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## Action Plan





# CONTENTS

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**Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board  
Equality and Human Rights Values Statement .....03**

**01 The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ..... 06**

**02 Our Ambition for Equality and Human Rights ..... 07**

**03 A Framework for Implementing the Duty ..... 08**

**04 Steps to Implementing the Duty in Limerick and  
Clare Education and Training Board. .... 10**

**05 2020 Action Plan for Implementing the Duty  
in Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board ..... 13**

# Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board Equality and Human Rights Values Statement

**Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board has developed this equality and human rights values statement to support our work to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect human rights.**

**Our equality and human rights values statement is a tool to allow our ETB to apply a values lens to embedding a coherent and consistent approach to promoting equality, preventing discrimination and protecting human rights, across all of our function areas and encompassing our roles as a service provider and employer.**

## **Applying our Equality and Human Rights Values Statement**

In applying our values statement, we are focused on the identity, situation and experience of people experiencing inequality and disadvantage across grounds of gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, membership of the Traveller community, and socio-economic status.

- ➔ **Situation refers to the social and economic status of the group and its members, including education status.**
- ➔ **Experience refers to nature and quality of the interactions of the group and its members with public institutions and the wider society.**
- ➔ **Identity refers to the manner in which the group and its members give expression to their identity and the specific needs that arise from this.**

Our policies, procedures, practice and processes will reflect our approach to building this organisational culture.

In implementing this statement, we respect the boundaries set by broader legislative requirements, national policy, and funding availability.

## Our Values

We are motivated in our work by the following equality and human rights values:



### Respect

Respect is about mutual empathy, integrity, fairness, and kindness. It involves listening to, and consideration of the perspectives of the diversity of our learners, staff and the wider community.

#### Our Priority

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board strives to contribute to realising a culture of respect and dignity in communities and across society.

#### Our Approach

The ETB will ensure an organisational culture of respect, dignity and wellbeing and a respectful and safe working and learning environment through: openness, responsiveness, active listening to diverse perspectives, and ensuring that all forms of discrimination are prevented and addressed.



### Inclusion

Inclusion is about recognising, valuing and harnessing the richness of difference. It involves a recognition that diversity brings opportunities for innovation that enrich the learning environment and workplace.

#### Our Priority

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board strives to be inclusive in employment and service provision and to be a reflection of the diverse communities we serve. We give particular focus to being inclusive of those who are most marginalised and who experience inequality and discrimination. We seek to harness the potential of a diverse workplace and learning environment.

#### Our Approach

The ETB will build and embed an inclusive culture and environment. We will operate in an accessible and flexible manner and will strive to remove barriers to participation in the workplace and in our services.



## Empowerment

Empowerment is about enabling individuals, groups and communities to have the personal and social power to influence decisions affecting their lives and the life of their communities.

### Our Priority

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board strives to enhance the self-esteem and confidence of our learners to realise their potential. We strive to support and enable the professional development of all staff. We seek to build a workplace and learning environment that is enabling and accountable.

### Our Approach

The ETB will engage learners and staff in decision-making and learners in processes of co-production regarding their learning. We will ensure meaningful, two-way consultation and collaboration with staff and learners, and accountability in decision-making.



## Social Justice

Social justice is about ensuring equality of outcome by providing access to opportunities and resources to enable full participation by all in economic, social, political and cultural life. It involves prioritising a focus on individuals and groups experiencing inequality and those who are marginalised.

### Our Priority

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board strives to break cycles of disadvantage and to remove the barriers experienced by individuals and groups who are marginalised, to enable more equal outcomes.

### Our Approach

The ETB will identify and seek to remove barriers to access and participation in our services and workplace, by applying innovative and adaptive approaches to: curriculum development and delivery; organisational development and change management processes.

# 01

## The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 requires:

- (1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to:
  - Eliminate discrimination;
  - Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services; and
  - Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

S42(a)(b) establish three key steps that public bodies should follow, in regard to implementing the Duty: **Assess**; **Address**; and **Report** (see section 4.3 for more detail).

- (2) (a) set out in a manner that is accessible to the public in its strategic plan (howsoever described) an **assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues, and**
- (b) **report in a manner that is accessible to the public on developments and achievements in that regard in its annual report (howsoever described).**

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) guidance identifies the following groups as the main focus regarding implementing the Duty: "Keep the focus on people across the nine grounds included in equality legislation and on the potential impact of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion".<sup>1</sup> The nine grounds in the equality legislation are: gender (including gender identity); civil status; family status (including lone parents and carers); age; disability; sexual orientation; race; religion; and membership of the Traveller community.

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2019). [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#). Page 17.

# 02

## Our Ambition for Equality and Human Rights

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board continues to implement a strategic vision that is underpinned by a commitment to deliver equality and human rights outcomes for our students, learners, staff, and wider community stakeholders.

This ambition, set out in our current Strategy Statement 2017-2021, is shaped by our core organisational values of: Empowerment, Continuous Improvement, Accountability, Quality, Learner Focus, Partnership, and Equality.

Delivering on our statutory obligations to implement the equality and human rights duty (the Duty), allows us to build on this work, through the development of a planned and systematic, values-led approach to equality and human rights for all of our stakeholders and across all of our function areas.

### Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board: desired outcomes from implementing the Duty:

- the organisation is known for our strong commitment to equality and human rights: striving to eliminate discrimination, remove barriers, and ensure human rights and equality outcomes for our students, learners, and staff,
- addressing our equality and human rights obligations is embedded in organisational culture, from the planning level, through to our day-to-day operations,
- an open, accommodating, universal learning environment is in place, reflected in the removal of barriers to access and participation, to ensure equality of outcome, and
- an increase in staff capacity, with the diversity of the communities we serve reflected in our staff team.



# 03

## A Framework for Implementing the Duty

### 3.1 A values-led approach

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board will implement the Duty using a values-led approach. This aligns with:

- our organisational strategic approach: the core values of: Equality, Learner Focus, Empowerment, Continuous Improvement, Quality, Accountability, and Partnership underpin the work of the ETB, and
- the IHREC guidance on implementing the Duty: "Implementation of the Duty can assist an organisation to define and give expression to equality and human rights values related to its purpose and key public sector values."<sup>2</sup>

In 2019, staff members from across the organisation were involved in developing the ETB's Equality and Human Rights Values Statement. The values of: Respect, Empowerment, Inclusion, and Social Justice were identified as motivating our commitment to equality and human rights.

The values statement enables us to be explicit about our equality and human rights values. This is a foundation for a values-led approach to implementing the Duty. It is also valuable in underpinning an organisational culture concerned for equality and human rights.

Our Equality and Human Rights Values Statement (see Appendix A) is a tool to allow the organisation to apply a values lens to embedding a coherent and consistent approach to promoting equality, preventing discrimination and protecting human rights, across all of our function areas and encompassing our roles as a service provider and employer.

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<sup>2</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2019). Op cit. Page 18.

### 3.2 A planned and systematic approach

The legislation envisages that three key steps for implementation of the Duty: Assess, Address, and Report, are located within the planning cycle of an organisation.

The IHREC guidance states: "The Duty is an ongoing obligation on public bodies, which must be incorporated as part of an organisation's overall strategic planning cycle."<sup>3</sup>

Implementing the Duty, therefore, should become an integral part of the planning cycle of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. This enables a planned and systematic approach to addressing equality and human rights concerns relevant to the functions of the ETB. A planned and systematic approach to implementing the Duty will allow us to build on and deepen our current work on equality and human rights.

A planned and systematic approach is underpinned by the following:

- **an institutional structure with a mandate to drive, support, and monitor implementation of the Duty: currently this structure is the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group,**
- **senior management leadership to ensure the Duty is integral to organisational planning, review and monitoring, and, therefore, organisational culture, and**
- **formal policies for equality and human rights in employment and service provision, setting out the standards to be achieved and the steps that will be taken where such standards are not met for staff and service users, and**
- **a staff capacity to implement the Duty, using a values-led approach.**

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<sup>3</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2019). Op cit. Page 2.

# 04

## Steps to Implementing the Duty in Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board

### 4.1 Key planning and review moments

The steps taken by the ETB to implement the Duty, will align with key moments in our planning cycles. In this way, we can ensure that the process of implementing the Duty becomes embedded in, rather than an add-on to our current planning, delivery and review processes, structures and systems.

The key moments in the planning cycles of the ETB which could include a focus on implementing the Duty are:

- Preparation of the organisation's Strategy Statement 2021+
- Preparation of annual Service Plans and Annual Reports
- Preparation of the Strategic Performance Agreement with SOLAS
- Preparation of our FET Strategic Framework 2020+ and Implementation Plan
- Preparation and review of the FET Division's frameworks and action plans
- Preparation of FARR and PLSS reports to SOLAS
- Preparation of the Youthwork Plan 2022+
- Implementation of quality improvement planning procedures
- Development and review of internal policies and procedures
- Development of Service Level Agreements with funded organisations
- Development and review of Local Community Development Plans through the LCDC.

The preparation of the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board: Strategy Statement, Annual Service Plans, and Annual Reports are of particular importance in regard to embedding a specific focus on implementing the Duty that has reach across all function areas of the organisation. The development and review of internal policies and procedures have a particular importance in securing implementation of the Duty in our employment and corporate affairs (including procurement, funding, and commissioning) functions.

## 4.2 Ensuring an institutional capacity to implement the Duty

Equality and human rights have been and will continue to be the responsibility of all staff in the organisation. Leadership for equality and human rights and implementation of the Duty will continue to be provided by senior management. Senior management will:

- assess key decisions at senior management level for the manner in which they reflect the Duty and the Equality and Human Rights Values Statement,
- monitor and review progress on implementing the Duty on a regular basis at senior management team meetings, and
- encourage staff engagement with the Duty and its potential, including, the steps required under the Duty.

The ETB’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group will act as a key driver to commencing, driving and monitoring the work of the organisation to implement the Duty.

The role of the Working Group in regard to implementation of the Duty, will be to:

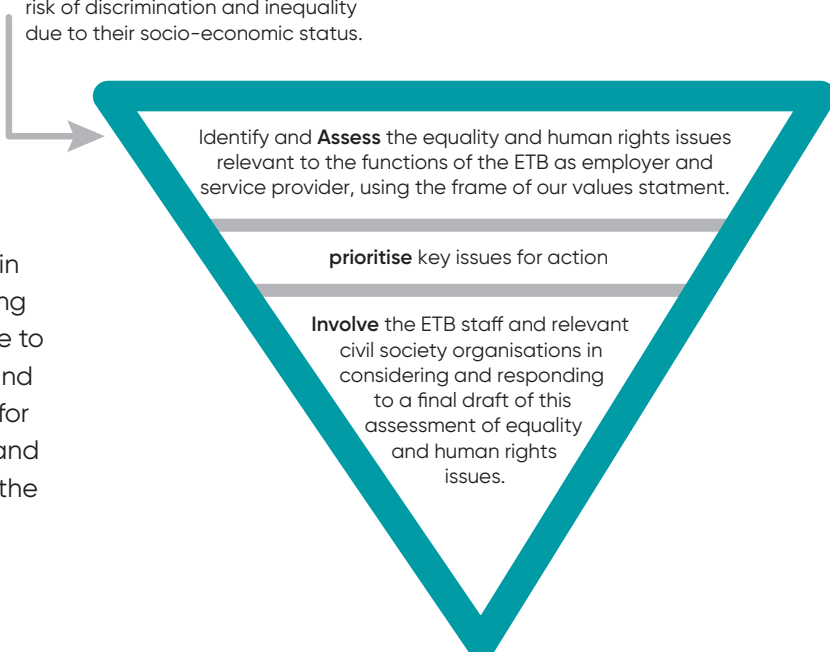
- prepare and keep under review an annual implementation plan for the Duty based on this action plan,
- undertake and keep under review an assessment of equality and human rights issues, as per the Assess step,
- support and ensure implementation of the Duty at the identified key moments for the ETB,
- establish and communicate good practice in the ETB in implementing the Duty and in addressing equality and human rights issues,
- promote action to give visibility to, and engage our equality and human rights values, among students, learners, and staff, and
- engage relevant expertise to build staff capacity to implement the Duty.

## 4.3 Assess, Address, Report

Keep the focus on groups protected under equality legislation and those at risk of discrimination and inequality due to their socio-economic status.

### ASSESS

This step is foundational in ensuring the Duty drives a planned and systematic approach to equality and human rights in Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. It establishes the areas of change to be pursued by the ETB, if human rights and equality outcomes are to be advanced for the diversity of students, learners, staff, and wider community stakeholders, through the work of the organisation.



**ADDRESS**

The core step in implementing the Duty is to identify and plan for actions to address the equality and human rights issues assessed and prioritised. This is the step where current actions by the ETB, to address equality and human rights concerns, are noted and any further actions required are identified for inclusion in plans, programmes, policies, and procedures.

At each of the key planning/review moments, outlined in 4.1, the ETB will:

- ➔ test plans close to final draft stage to assess if they include adequate and sufficient actions to address the relevant issues assessed and if they contribute appropriately to the statement of priority for each value, outlined in our equality and human rights values statement, and
- ➔ test policies and procedures close to final draft stage to assess if they include adequate and sufficient processes to address the relevant issues assessed and if they contribute appropriately to the statement of process for each value.

**REPORT**

The legal requirement to publicly report on progress made, in regard to actions undertaken to address issues prioritised under the Assessment step, is an important moment for accountability and reflection on implementation of and impact from the Duty.

We will ensure that our reporting under the Duty will be integral to our reporting mechanisms across the three directorates of the organisation.

This reporting will address:

- ➔ the steps taken by the ETB during the year to implement the Duty, and
- ➔ the progress made in relation to the equality and human rights issues assessed and prioritised.

**4.4 Engage our Equality and Human Rights Values**

The organisational culture of the ETB will be influenced in implementing the Duty and will equally be influential in securing the full and effective implementation of the Duty. The Equality and Human Rights Values Statement is a valuable resource in this regard: staff, students, and learners will need to be engaged with these values if the organisation is to realise this potential.

This will involve action, led by the EDI Working Group, to:

- ➔ promote debate on the values in staff meetings and in learner and student spaces,
- ➔ include discussion on the values in internal communication materials and in curricula for students and learners, and
- ➔ find opportunities to make the statement and the values visible for all our stakeholders.

# 05

## 2020 Action Plan for Implementing the Duty in Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board

### During 2020, we will undertake the following actions:

#### Ensuring an institutional capacity to implement the Duty:

- ➔ we will ensure that there are representatives of the three organisation divisions involved in the work of the EDI Working Group to implement the Duty.

The EDI Working Group will:

- ➔ ensure that Working Group representatives (from each of the three divisions) are facilitated to participate in the forthcoming ETBI training on implementing the Duty,
- ➔ agree the final ETB Values Statement draft and circulate to all staff, particularly to those staff that attended the focus group meetings with Values Lab.

#### Assess

- ➔ The EDI Working Group will undertake an evidence-based assessment of equality and human rights issues. As part of this process, the organisation will facilitate the following:
  - participation of staff and civil society organisations representing service users and policy beneficiaries from the identified groups, in checking the final draft of the assessment.

#### Address

following the Assessment of equality and human rights issues, the EDI Working Group will:

- ➔ Identify actions currently being taken by the organisation, that address the equality and human rights issues identified in the assessment,
- ➔ Identify gaps in regard to issues identified that could usefully be addressed by the ETB,
- ➔ prioritise actions to be addressed in forthcoming plans and programmes
- ➔ map current organisational policy and planning landscape to:
  - identify key planning, review, reporting moments to include prioritised actions,
  - identify current or proposed plans/policies/procedures that could be subject to an equality and human rights impact assessment to address the gaps identified in the assessment.

## Report

- ➔ we will set targets and related KPIs, in regard to its work to implement the Duty, in the annual service plans. These targets will be reported on in the annual reports.

## Engage our Equality and Human Rights Values

- ➔ The ETB will find ways to engage internal and external stakeholders with our values statement, including through:
  - making the values visible in our centres, colleges and schools, and on our website,
  - incorporating the values in our strategic external communications and our internal communication processes and structures.





Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna  
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