



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council

# **Galway County Council:**

## **Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty**

### **Implementation Plan**

**July 2023**

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# 1. Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Duty)<sup>1</sup> is a statutory obligation on public bodies to 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.

Public bodies must undertake three steps in giving effect to this Duty:

- **Step 1. Assess:** Undertake an assessment of the equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups for the Duty (with particular focus on issues that have relevance to the specific functions of that public body) and to make that assessment publicly available.
- **Step 2. Address:** Identify and communicate the plans, policies and actions being taken or proposed, to address the issues identified in the assessment, in the plans, policies, programmes and services of the public body; and
- **Step 3. Report:** Report annually on developments and achievements in implementing the Duty.

The identified groups for the Duty are<sup>2</sup>:

- Those groups covered by the nine protected grounds under equality legislation: gender (including gender expression, gender identity and sex characteristics); 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 (encompassing skin colour, nationality and ethnic origin); religion (any or no religious belief), and membership of the Traveller community.
- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission recommend that those at risk of or experiencing poverty and social exclusion are also included as an identified ground for the Duty, thereby adding a further ground of 'socio-economic status'.
- Rights holders under the various international human rights instruments.

The Duty covers all functions of a public body. The functions of Galway County Council encompass: employment; service provision; promotion; regulator; policy making; and corporate affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> [Section 42](#) Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

<sup>2</sup> [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2019.

## 2. Equality and Human Rights Values Statement

### 2.1 Introduction

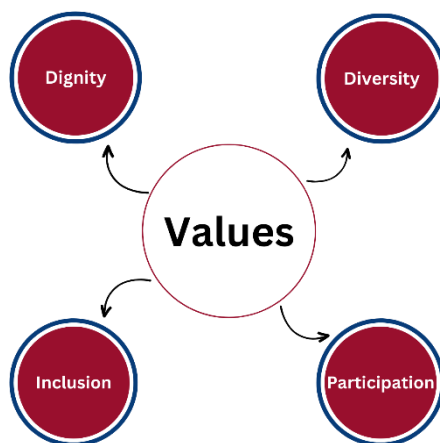
Galway County Council has developed an equality and human rights values statement to support a values-led approach to our implementation of the Duty. This statement identifies and defines the four values that motivate our ambitions for the Duty: dignity; diversity; participation; and inclusion. For each of these values we establish:

- **a statement of priority** – the implications of the value for the change we seek to contribute to and the priorities we pursue as an organisation, so as to take account of equality and human rights; and
- **a statement of process** – the implications of the value for the way we work in pursuing this change, so as to take account of equality and human rights.

This equality and human rights values statement provides a framework for our implementation of the Duty in that:

- The assessment of equality and issues, the first step required under the Duty, is framed by these values to ensure the full scope of equality and human rights is addressed; and
- The statement of priority and statement of purpose for each value serve as benchmarks in our decision-making to sustain and remain aligned with our ambition for equality and human rights under the Duty, in particular when implementing the Address step of the Duty.

### 2.2 Equality and Human Rights Values Statement



#### Dignity

*Dignity is about respect, courtesy, fairness, and belonging. It involves equal treatment, and being responsive to individual needs.*

**Statement of Priority:** Galway County Council promotes and supports a model of social cohesion where people and communities from the identified groups hold a status and

standing as valued members of society and enjoy interactions with the wider community of respect and courtesy.

**Statement of Process:** We work to create an organisational environment where customers, staff and policy beneficiaries from the identified groups are treated fairly, enjoy a sense of belonging, and experience relationships and interactions of respect, and where privacy is respected. We have policies in place that set standards in this regard and implement these effectively.

## Diversity

**Diversity is about an organisation being reflective of the society it serves and being accessible in all its functions. It involves adapting for the specific needs of the diversity of people.**

**Statement of Priority:** Galway County Council promotes and supports an accessible environment for the identified groups, and strives to advance, apply, and enable principles and practice of universal design for infrastructure and the public realm, and for service provision and workplaces.

**Statement of Process:** We work in a manner that is accessible and flexible in making reasonable accommodation for the diversity of customers, staff, and policy beneficiaries from across the identified groups, making adaptations for their specific needs within the resources available, and ensuring the systems are in place for reasonable accommodation to be implemented, and effectively communicated.

## Participation

**Participation is about being heard and having a say, and about engagement and collaboration. It involves being open, informing, listening to, and involving the diversity of people, and their representative organisations, in consultation and decision-making processes and in partnership endeavours.**

**Statement of Priority:** Galway County Council works to promote and support representative organisations across the identified groups, and to establish and engage in, participative structures and partnership ways of working that involve people from the identified groups and their representative organisations in the development of the County.

**Statement of Process:** We work in a manner that listens to customers, staff, and policy beneficiaries from the identified groups through a range of channels, ensures that they are heard, and gives consideration to and feedback on, their views. We engage people from the identified groups and their representative organisations in our decision-making and consultative processes and structures.

## Inclusion

**Inclusion is about the distribution of and access to resources and improving wellbeing and quality of life for the diversity of people. It involves targeting people experiencing inequality and enabling their progress and change for the better in their circumstances.**

**Statement of Priority:** Galway County Council strives to promote and support the full and effective participation of people and communities from the identified groups in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of the County.

**Statement of Process:** We work in a manner that targets and provides assistance and resources to improve the situation and experience of people and communities from the identified groups.

## 3. Assessment of Equality and Human Rights issues

### 3.1 Introduction

The assessment required under the first step of the Duty establishes the equality and human rights issues facing the groups identified for the Duty that have a relevance for the functions of Galway County Council.

This assessment is not an assessment of Galway County Council nor its performance. It is the foundation for implementing the Duty, enabling a planned and systematic approach to equality and human rights. It serves as the basis from which to sustain and further develop progress on equality and human rights issues.

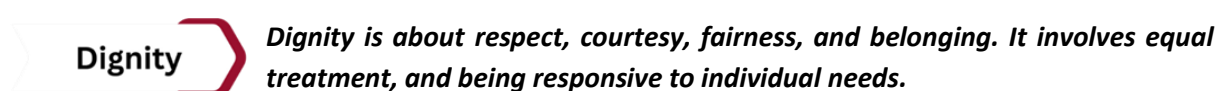
The four values that motivate our ambitions for equality and human rights in implementing the Duty - dignity; diversity; inclusion; and participation - are used as a frame within which to set out the assessment.

This assessment is evidence-based, with the evidence base provided in the Appendix to this implementation plan.

### 3.2 Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

Addressing the equality and human rights issues identified below reflects a commitment to respond to the specific oppressions involved in racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, sectarianism, sexism, and ageism.

The equality and human rights issues identified relate to all of the identified groups unless otherwise indicated. In some instances, specific examples are given for particular groups where there is a unique experience for that group in regard to the issue(s) or where that group experience significant /persistent inequality /discrimination /human rights violations in regard to the issue(s).



The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Galway County Council, are:

- Bias, false assumptions, and stereotypes, including:

- comparatively high levels of stereotyping of older people, Travellers, migrants, women, and LGBTI+ people; and
- stigma experienced by LGBTI+ people.
- Discrimination, systemic and individual, including:
  - seeking work, in the workplace and in accessing public and private services, including housing;
  - pregnancy related discrimination, discrimination based on criminal conviction, and discrimination when transitioning gender identity at work; and
  - comparatively high levels of discrimination experienced by Black and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers and Roma, people with disabilities, and LGBTI+ people.
- Harassment, sexual harassment, micro-aggressions, bullying, abuse, and violence, including:
  - gender-based violence with repercussions at work, in becoming homeless, and with lack of support services; and
  - lack of safety and insecurity for older people and LGBTI+ people in public spaces.
- Having to hide one's identity for fear of discrimination or harassment at work, in accessing services, and in public spaces, including:
  - for Travellers, Roma, LGBTI+ people and people with hidden disabilities in the workplace.
- Hate speech, incitement to hatred, the spreading of fear in relation to diversity, and public debate that normalises such positions, including:
  - for migrants and asylum seekers, with a lack of intercultural initiative to prevent the emergence of such phenomena; and
  - for LGBT people.
- Limitations on independence and autonomy, including:
  - institutionalisation of people with disabilities and failure to enable choice and control over where they might live;
  - lack of support and provision for assisted decision making for people with disabilities;
  - institutionalisation of older people and failure to enable people to age in place;
  - financial dependence for young people;
  - application of the Habitual Residence Conditions in relation to Roma;
  - direct provision for refugees and asylum seekers in accommodation centres; and
  - lack of access to information and failure to enable informed choices.
- Isolation, including:
  - for Travellers, in terms of the location of their accommodation;
  - for LGBTI+ people, in coming out and in living in rural areas;
  - young people, in terms of lack of facilities and spaces to meet; and



- older people and people with disabilities living alone.
- Lack of policies and procedures to respond to and resolve issues of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment that arise and failure to adequately apply such policies and procedures when such issues arise.
- Under-reporting of discrimination for fear of victimisation, lack of awareness of rights, perspectives that change is not possible, and lack of information on policies and procedures in place.



***Diversity is about an organisation being reflective of the society it serves and being accessible in all its functions. It involves adapting for the specific needs of the diversity of people.***

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Galway County Council, are:

- Failure to make reasonable accommodation and adapt for specific needs in employment and in service provision, including:
  - making accommodations and flexibility in adapting the workplace and service provision for people with disability;
  - lack of language interpretation and translation in the workplace and in service provision, including sign language;
  - failure to adapt for and resource cultural difference across minority ethnic groups, including lack of recognition for and accommodation of the distinct identity and culture of the Traveller community;
  - lack of culturally appropriate accommodation available to the Traveller community;
  - lack of gradual and flexible retirement arrangements for older people;
  - lack of recognition for same sex couples and lack of provision of gender neutral services to accommodate LGBTI+ people; and
  - lack of flexible working arrangements and of flexibility in the delivery of services to enable access for those with caring responsibilities
- Lack of supports and services to meet specific needs of people from the identified groups, including:
  - supports and services required by disabled employees or service users;
  - supports required by older people for independent living; and
  - lack of supports to Black and minority ethnic groups including Travellers and Roma to preserve, sustain and maintain their distinct cultures.
- Failure to plan by design for diversity and its practical implications and absence of the systems required for such planning and development.
- Lack of understanding of diversity, lack of knowledge on how to make reasonable accommodation, lack of training on diversity and addressing its practical implications,

absence of a policy on adapting for diversity, and lack of capacity to put in place the systems required to accommodate and adapt for diversity.

- Lack of information made available and accessible on the reasonable accommodation available and how to get access to this.
- Unwelcoming institutional environments, workplace, and service provision settings, including:
  - situations that preclude or fail to encourage and enable people to be fully open about their identity; and
  - situations where there is no positive visibility for diversity.
- Inaccessibility of the public realm, buildings, IT systems, and transport services, including:
  - barriers of access faced by people with disability;
  - lack of age friendly public spaces;
  - absence of universal design principles and their application; and
  - lack of adaptability of residential units for the life-course.
- Communication and consultation and participation processes failing to take account of specific needs and barriers, including:
  - literacy;
  - language diversity;
  - failure to protect Irish language rights;
  - the need for plain English;
  - rural locations; and
  - digital inequality.
- Lack of outreach to the identified groups.
- Lack of spaces and opportunities for meeting, interaction, learning and initiative across diversity, including:
  - intergenerational spaces; and
  - intercultural spaces.
- Failure to take account of intersectionality and the diversity within the identified groups, and to respond adequately and appropriately to this diversity, in particular in targeted initiatives.
- Lack of equality data on the identified groups, including in particular Black and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, and LGBTI+ people.



## Inclusion

***Inclusion is about the distribution of and access to resources and improving wellbeing and quality of life for the diversity of people. It involves targeting people experiencing inequality and enabling their progress and change for the better in their circumstances.***

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Galway County Council, are:

- Homelessness, including:
  - particular relevance to the socio-economic status group;
  - over-representation of Black and minority ethnic people including Travellers, Roma, lone parents, migrants, people from minority religions, and young people; and
  - under-representation of people with disabilities among housing applicants.
- Housing disadvantage, including:
  - particular relevance to the socio-economic status group;
  - overcrowding in housing in particular for Black and minority ethnic people including Travellers, Roma, people with disabilities and young people;
  - sub-standard accommodation and living conditions, in particular for Travellers, Roma, lone parents and people with disabilities;
  - housing insecurity and poor conditions for the identified groups in the private rented sector; and
  - lack of financial support for home adaptations for people with disabilities.
- Poverty and low income
  - particular relevance to the socio-economic status group;
  - comparatively high levels of poverty for lone parents, people with disabilities, Roma, Travellers, and refugees;
  - low incomes, in particular for women and for people with disabilities;
  - additional costs of disability not catered for; and
  - pay and pension gaps, in particular for women.
- Unemployment, under-employment, and precarious work, including:
  - comparatively high levels of unemployment among young people, Black and minority ethnic people including Travellers and Roma, lone parents, and people with disabilities;
  - lack of access to decent work, in particular for women, lone parents, migrants, minority ethnic people including Travellers and people with disabilities;
  - lack of recognition for qualifications of migrant people;
  - concentration in part-time and precarious work, in particular for women and lone parents;
  - limited diversity in public sector employment; and
  - employment segregation including predominance of women in care work.
- Lack of promotion and career progression, including:
  - barriers to promotion experienced by women and by people with disabilities.

- Digital inequality, lack of infrastructure, equipment, and skills, including
  - significant inequalities for older people, people living in poverty, and Travellers; and
  - increase in online service provision and information provision in a context of digital inequality.
- Inequalities within the arts, including:
  - barriers to engaging with the arts and participating in the arts as consumers and as producers; and
  - barriers to advancing careers within the arts, in particular for women.
- Inadequate care infrastructure, including:
  - high cost of childcare;
  - inadequate provision of childcare;
  - lack of care services for older people; and
  - unequal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men.
- Lack of targeting and positive action to directly address the disadvantage of the identified groups.



## Participation

***Participation is about being heard and having a say, and about engagement and collaboration. It involves being open, informing, listening to, and involving the diversity of people, and their representative organisations, in consultation and decision-making processes and in partnership endeavours.***

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Galway County Council, are:

- Lack of opportunities to have a say and participate in consultations and in decision-making processes, including:
  - lack of structures and systems in place to enable people to have a say;
  - inappropriate design of structures and systems for people to have a say;
  - hostility to diversity and excluding culture within structures and systems for people to have a say; and
  - limited range of policy fields that are open for consultation and participation.
- Lack of influence and meaningful participation through consultation processes and in decision-making processes, lack of impact through these processes, and lack of feedback after consultation and participation.
- Limited presence of people from the identified groups in decision-making positions.
- Lack of representation for people from the identified groups in public and political life, including:
  - under-representation of women in elected positions; and
  - lack of presence of Travellers and non-Irish citizens in elected positions and as candidates for election.

- Lack of, limited development of and/or limited resources for organisation within some identified groups.
- Lack of skills, knowledge, and awareness within the identified groups for an effective participation.

## 4. Enabling Implementation

### *Leadership*

The elected members give leadership for implementation of the Duty. The elected members and Council structures, including such as SPCs:

- engage equality and human rights values in their deliberations and ensure compliance with the Duty in their decision-making; and
- are familiarised with the Duty and its requirements and with the Galway County Council implementation plan for the Duty.

Senior management give a leadership for implementation of the Duty, by:

- organising familiarisation sessions to ensure they have an understanding of the Duty and its requirements;
- reviewing and approving the implementation plan for the Duty, and subsequent annual plans, and establishing an organisational priority for the Duty; and
- giving consideration to the Duty and ensuring alignment with the equality and human rights values in the decisions and actions taken by senior management.

Management responsibility for implementation of the Duty rests with Galway County Council's Management Team led by Corporate Services.

A Working Group on the Duty, drawn from across the organisation, is convened on a quarterly basis to:

- prepare annual plans for implementing the Duty – covering both enabling initiatives and implementation actions;
- providing support for those sections implementing the address step of the Duty;
- prepare a report and organise and support internal review and reflection on the progress made, and the further steps that might be taken to strengthen this;
- maintain a centralised data bank of records on implementation of the Duty within Galway County Council and the progress made on foot of this; and

- maintain its expertise in relation to the Duty and its implementation and ensure new members are enabled to achieve this level of expertise.

### ***Organisation Culture***

Senior management give leadership for an organisational culture concerned with equality and human rights, by consistently engaging the equality and human rights values of Galway County Council in their communications, decisions, and actions.

Internal and external communications include an ongoing and creative focus on the Duty and its implementation in Galway County Council, and on the equality and human rights values that underpin this, through; social media, website, posters; all-staff emails; staff intranet; and email signature blocks.

Staff events and initiatives are organised to:

- familiarise staff with the Duty and Galway County Council's ambitions for equality and human rights, the Duty and the benefits in its implementation; and build a staff ownership of the staff in seeking to further develop and realise these ambitions;
- celebrate diversity and, in particular, the diversity within Galway County

The Duty, and a focus on the equality and human rights values underpinning this, are a feature in the terms-of-reference developed for various groupings and structures within the Council.

### ***Capacity Building***

Specific training on the Address step of the Duty and the approach developed by Galway County Council to its implementation is provided to staff responsible for key moments in its implementation.

Training for elected members, for senior management and for members of Council structures, on the Duty, the approach being taken to its implementation and the ambition that informs this.

Staff training, including induction training, includes reference to the Duty and engages the equality and human rights values that underpin our approach.

A focus on the Duty and the equality and human rights values that underpin its implementation, and on staff practice based on these values, is included in our PMDS process.

### ***Consultation***

Consultation systems are in place to enable an appropriate consultative approach to implementing the Duty. These focus on civil society organisations representative of the identified groups and relevant staff networks. They reflect the approach taken to consultation undertaken for the assessment of equality and human rights issues.

### ***Tracking***

Data and information systems are strengthened, as required, to support tracking of our achievements under the Duty in addressing the equality and human rights issues as assessed.

Maintain adequate and appropriate records of steps taken on implementing the Duty and their impact across the organisation, making these available to the Working Group to hold centrally.

## **5. Implementation**

### **5.1 Address Step**

Public bodies, under the Address step of the Duty, are required to address the issues that have been identified in their assessment of equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups, in their plans, policies and actions.

The Address Step involves an identification of priority initiatives for implementation of the Duty. These would encompass plans, policies or actions that might be identified as being required to immediately respond to equality and human rights issues that are prioritised by the organisation.

The Address step of the Duty is also an ongoing obligation of the organisation and, in this, it is implemented as an integral part of the development and review of plans, policies, programmes and strategies – identified as key moments for implementing the Duty.

At the commencement of the development/review process:

- Review the assessment of equality and human rights issues to establish those issues that are relevant to the particular plan, policy, 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 statements of outcome or statements of process that are relevant.

In implementing the development/review process:

- Include a focus on the relevant equality and human rights issues in any evaluation or contextual review undertaken as part of the development/review process.
- 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 to ensure they are addressed and the values benchmarks to ensure they are respected during the development/review process.

At final draft stage of the development/review process:

- Convene a meeting of relevant staff to check that the draft adequately and appropriately addresses each of the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant, and that it is aligned with the relevant statements of priority and process in the equality and human rights values statement.

- Conduct a participative exercise, for initiatives of scale, with the working group for the Duty and, possibly, with representatives of the identified groups to check that the equality and human rights issues are adequately and appropriately identified and addressed.

After the development/review process:

- Establish and/or use existing monitoring 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 – the Report step of the Duty.
- Use this report to reflect on this progress and to strengthen the plan, policy, or programme as found to be necessary.

## **5.2 Priority Initiatives**

A number of initiatives are to be taken with priority to address issues of concern that emerge from the assessment of equality and human rights issues.

- Procurement and funding/grant aid procedures will reviewed and revised with a view to building in a process where the Duty is passed on to the contracting or recipient organisation, in a manner suited to the nature and scale of the organisation.
- The Address Step will be implemented in the preparation and drafting of the Local Economic and Community Plan.
- The recruitment policy will be reviewed in the light of the Duty and revised as found to be necessary.
- The customer charter and customer service action plan will be reviewed in the light of the Duty and revised as found to be necessary.
- A policy on a enabling a work environment that is welcoming to diversity will be developed in a manner aligned with the Duty.
- A number of enabling actions, drawn from Section 4, will be identified and implemented to support and secure an effective implementation of these priority initiatives.

## **5.3 Key Moments**

The Galway County Council Corporate Plan will be renewed in 2024 for the following period. The corporate plan is the cornerstone for implementing the Duty. The next Corporate Plan will update and include a link to: the assessment of equality and human rights issues; and the implementation plan for the Duty for the period of the next Corporate Plan.

Ongoing implementation of the Duty is integrated within the planning cycle of Galway County Council. Each year, key moments for implementing the Address Step are identified in terms of development and review processes in regard to policies, plans, services and programmes.

These key moments include, but are not limited to the development and review of:



- Annual business plans, which will also tag plans, policies, programmes, and strategies to be reviewed or developed for which the Address step is to be applied.
- County Development Plan.
- Operational strategies and service delivery plans, such as the homeless plan, the Traveller Accommodation Programme, the age friendly programme, the anti-social behaviour strategy, the libraries development plan, communication plans, and the digital strategy.
- Operational policies and procedures in service provision and programme delivery, such as the housing allocation scheme.
- Human resources policies and procedures.
- Corporate strategies, policies, and procedures, such as the corporate risk register and the ethic register.
- Design process for public realm initiatives, for buildings and infrastructure, and for programmes and services.

## 6. Report

The Galway County Council Annual Report will include a report on the developments and achievements in implementing the Duty, based on a report prepared by the working group.

The working group will organise or support a reflection process on this report with a view to celebrating success and to strengthening plans, policies, and actions to address the equality and human rights issues as found to be necessary.