



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy





EveryOne can achieve their full potential

1 Foreword by the Personnel Officer



Dear Colleagues

We are committed to providing an inclusive and diverse workplace for all employees which builds upon our core values and fosters a positive work environment where **EveryOne** can achieve their full potential.

In respect of this strategic objective, I am proud to present the **Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy**. This policy, developed through staff consultation, invites **EveryOne** to embrace, uphold and promote principles of diversity, equality and inclusion in every aspect of DAFM life.

This policy presents our staff with our **vision** for a workplace where diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated fairly regardless of their beliefs, status or identity. In pursuit of this **vision**, we provide our staff with an outline of why diversity, equality and inclusion are fundamental to our organisation and how we can build upon our strengths and address our shortcomings and so make our **vision** a reality.

Our **Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy** is organised into sections in order to help **EveryOne** participate in this vision.

- 2 Introduction** outlines our vision and responsibilities with respect to the Department, the wider Civil Service and 21st century society.
- 3 Why Diversity and what do we want to achieve?** provides an outline of our objectives in formulating this policy.
- 4 Legal Environment** provides a summary of legislation pertaining to equality and discrimination.
- 5 Behaviour in the Workplace** proposes guidelines to support **EveryOne** in upholding principles of diversity, equality and inclusion.
- 6 Department Undertakings and Actions** summarises the responsibilities and activities of the Department with respect to diversity, equality and inclusion.
- 7 What can I do?** presents guidance for employees who encounter discrimination or unfair treatment in our workplace.

Thank you to everybody who contributed to its formation. I would like to remind our staff that feedback and contribution is always welcome- HRStrategy@agriculture.gov.ie

Sharon M Murphy
Personnel Officer



Introduction

Our vision

Our Statement of Strategy sets out our vision for staff recognition and commitment to our people:

‘We support and value our staff for who they are and the work they contribute to the Department’

Diversity is aligned to our business goals through Goal 5 of the Strategy which states that the Department will “Continue to: develop a highly skilled, diverse and gender-balanced workforce”.

Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organisation. It is an understanding that each individual is unique and recognises our unique differences. We want to encourage diversity in experience, skill sets, thought processes and positive behaviours.

Diversity is increasingly seen as an asset to organisations and is linked to a positive working environment and better performance. A fair, open and accommodating workplace generates an atmosphere which fosters high morale for a diverse range of employees and maximises their opportunity to reach their potential and contribute to a high quality service delivery.

In our Department today, as with all sectors in the country we have a changing workforce. Diversity is no longer just about generation or gender,

‘It is also about experience, skill sets, and thought processes’

Irish society and workplaces generally are becoming increasingly diverse due to a number of factors such as higher participation of women in the workplace, increasing numbers of non-national workers, greater inclusion of people with disabilities, and people of increasingly diverse family status, marital status, age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, cultural participation and expression.

Recognising diversity in our workplace will assist **EveryOne** in understanding how diversity brings a greater skills base, broader range of ideas, creative thinking, stimulating team discussion. We celebrate the unique value, skills, talent, diverse thinking and experience **EveryOne** brings and seek to ensure that **EveryOne** maintains their individual identity, interests and opinions in the professional forum that is our workplace.

We are an Equal Opportunity Employer and will always strive to maintain a work environment in which all staff are treated with respect and dignity. We are committed to being a modern, diverse and inclusive organisation that reflects and is capable of serving 21st century Irish society.



Introduction

Civil Service Renewal Plan

Our *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy* builds on commitments set out in the *Civil Service Renewal Plan*, launched in October 2014. This Renewal Plan provides an action plan to renew the Civil Service and aims to further develop the capacity of the Civil Service by building on what we do well, identifying what we can do better and setting out the actions we can take to prepare for the future.

The Renewal Plan makes the following commitments:

‘We will maximise the contribution of all staff, by nurturing and rewarding talent and by encouraging civil servants to develop their potential in a workplace committed to equality, diversity, and mutual respect.’

‘To achieve the vision for the future, we need to recruit regularly, become an employer of choice and set the highest value on the quality and performance of staff at all levels and in all roles. This needs to be supported by a renewed focus on achieving greater equality of opportunity, diversity, and gender equality across our workforce so that over time we build a Civil Service that more closely reflects the society in which it works.’

‘The Plan also notes that: “Increasing the diversity of capabilities in the Civil Service and the availability of specialist skills alongside core Civil Service skills will improve our focus on outcomes, strengthen our performance and enhance the delivery of public services.’

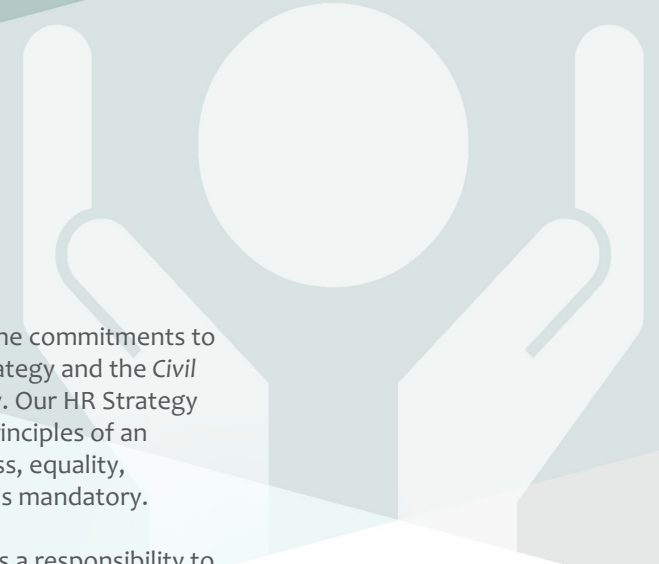
EveryOne - HR Strategy

HR Division is responsible for implementing the commitments to our people as set out in the Statement of Strategy and the *Civil Service Renewal Plan* through the HR Strategy. Our HR Strategy reaffirms our core values and endorses the principles of an organisational culture where integrity, fairness, equality, openness and mutual respect for each other is mandatory.

EveryOne working within our Department has a responsibility to treat colleagues and customers with dignity and respect. The onus is on each individual to display integrity, fairness and respect in the course of carrying out their duties and all interactions with colleagues and customers. Managers and those responsible for a team of people need to lead by example and embrace honest and ethical behaviours as key core values in their area of work and among the teams that they lead. Managers are responsible for supporting their team in meeting these standards and promoting a culture of dignity and respect.

People Strategy for the Civil Service

Our policy acknowledges our commitment to Diversity under *People Strategy for the Civil Service 2017-2020*, specifically Action 18 ‘Review and revise the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Policy’, and supports the intention of building a diverse workforce of the future which is reflective of Irish society and promotes our duty to equality.





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Why diversity and what do we want to achieve?

Why do we need a diversity policy in our workplace?

This *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy* recognises the talents and skills of all our staff and provides for a culture that seeks, respects, values and harnesses differences. Our organisational culture is one based on inclusivity and mutual respect where **EveryOne** is entitled to enjoy a prejudice-free working environment that rejects any form of discrimination.

A diverse workforce gives our organisation a broader range of ideas and insights to draw on in decision making and policy development.

A diverse workforce that is comfortable communicating varying points of view provides a larger pool of ideas. We can draw from that pool to meet business strategy needs and the needs of our clients more effectively.

Diversity is not just about physical characteristics but about differences in thought, outlook and approach. If we surround ourselves with people who look like us and see the world as we do, inevitably we will be more prone to ‘groupthink’, producing conclusions that reflect our shared outlook and preconceptions.

Drawing on a greater variety of backgrounds and experiences of life helps us to avoid narrow conclusions and provides the contrasting opinions and discussion necessary to cast issues in a different light and produce better decisions.

The Department is committed to public service core values, of which equality, respect and fairness are central. We recognise our responsibility to the society which we serve and the value in providing a workplace where diversity reflects contemporary and evolving Irish society. In presenting this policy we demonstrate our dedication to upholding principles of diversity, inclusion and equality and encourage a dynamic and positive work environment which informs our public service ethos and commitment to our culture and our society.

EveryOne is entitled to enjoy a
**prejudice-free working
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Why diversity and what do we want to achieve?

EveryOne comes with different life experiences, perspectives and views, all of which bring value to the Department.

What do we want to achieve with this policy?

Our *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy* reaffirms our core values and continues to promote a culture of integrity, fairness, equality, openness and mutual respect for each other. Through this policy we are seeking to explore, understand and develop practices and approaches that embrace diversity, equality and inclusion and, through this, to create an inclusive culture where all can flourish and realise their potential.

EveryOne comes with different life experiences, perspectives and views, all of which bring value to the Department.

This policy is a stated commitment that requires all staff to interact in a professional manner and contribute to a work environment that reflects the spirit of equal opportunity, free from prohibited or inappropriate conduct.

Our policy has the following objectives:

- Foster awareness about diversity, equality and inclusion.
- Stimulate discussion about bias, unconscious bias and discrimination, and how it can affect our organisation.
- Challenge our thinking on attitudes and values and how they affect our colleagues.
- Encourage and support those working in our Department to actively advocate for diversity, equality and inclusion for all.
- Help to support an anti-bias approach in all our activities.
- Challenge thinking and assist critical reflection on stereotyping, prejudices and discrimination.
- In order to effectively manage a multi-generational workforce, we must recognise everyone as an individual, and empower our managers to coach on both personal and organisational objectives.
- To foster the recognition that each generation is distinctive and brings a set of strengths to the workplace.

to create an inclusive
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Legal Environment

Legal Environment

The foundation for equality in the workplace is the *Employment Equality Act 1998*, which promotes equality and prohibits harassment and discrimination across nine grounds.

The Act is designed to promote equality of opportunity in employment between employed persons by making discrimination and harassment in employment unlawful on the above mentioned grounds.

The nine grounds are:

Gender, Marital Status, Family Status, Age, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion and membership of the Traveller community.

The Act allows positive action in relation to certain groups, i.e. gender, membership of the Traveller community, people over the age of 50 and people with disabilities.

The *Equal Status Act 2000*, aims to promote equality and prohibit discrimination and harassment and related behaviour in connection with the provision of goods and services, property and other opportunities to which the public generally or a section of the public has access, on similar grounds to those contained in the *Employment Equality Act*.

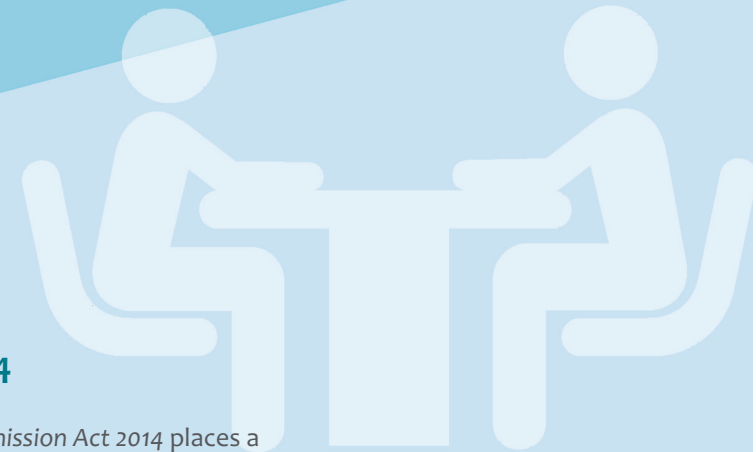
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

The *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* places a positive duty on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights, in their daily work. This is referred to as 'The Public Sector Duty'. Section 42 of the Act places an obligation on Public Sector Bodies to assess and identify the human rights and equality issues that are relevant to their functions as an employer.

What is Discrimination?

In Ireland, discrimination has a specific meaning under the *Employment Acts 1998-2015* and the *Equal Status Acts 2000-2015*. It is described as 'the treatment of a person in a less favourable way than another person is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on any of the nine grounds'.

Eliminate discrimination,
promote equality and protect
human rights, in their daily work
'The Public Sector Duty'





Biases come in all forms e.g.
generational, people with disabilities,
LGBTQ+ people, working parents

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Legal Environment

Prejudices, Bias and Stereotypes

While legislation sets the legal environment around obvious discrimination and our obligations, we all have unconscious biases where we instinctively categorise people and things using easily observed criteria such as age, weight, skin colour, and gender. We can, and do, subconsciously classify people according to a variety of criteria including educational level, disability, sexuality, accent, social status, job title, where they live; automatically assigning presumed traits to anyone we subconsciously put in a particular group. Biases come in all forms, e.g., generational, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people, working parents.

The clear disadvantage of this subconscious behaviour is that it can lead us to make assumptions about our colleagues, take action based on those biases and make decisions in favour of one group or individual over another. Our decisions can be influenced by a number of factors, i.e., our personal experiences, background and environmental conditions all affect our choices whether we realise it or not. Our tendency to think in this way may not be intentional but it can lead to discrimination.

No matter how unbiased we think we are we may have unconscious negative opinions about people who are outside our own group

No matter how unbiased we think we are we may have unconscious negative opinions about people who are outside our own group. The more exposed we are to different groups of people the less likely we are to feel prejudice against them. Managers can play a key role in unearthing these hidden biases by declaring their intentions to be non-biased, ensuring fair and equitable distribution of different types of work and opportunities for self development within their team.

Prejudices, Bias and Stereotypes

- Direct discrimination may arise where an employer treats a person less favourably than another person would be treated specifically because of membership of one of the nine grounds covered by the *Employment Equality Act 1998*.
- Indirect discrimination may occur where an employer imposes a provision or requirement which, on the face of it, applies equally to all persons but because of one of the nine grounds a person would have greater difficulty complying with it than other persons without that characteristic. In other words, the requirement or provision may appear neutral but has a disproportionate impact.
- Discrimination by association may happen when a person associated with another person, who belongs to a particular ethnic minority, is treated less favourably because of that association.





There is more to diversity than meets the eye

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Behaviour in the workplace

Behaviours in the workplace that foster a diverse and fair environment

EveryOne has a right to be treated with dignity and respect in a fair and consistent manner in an environment where inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable. **EveryOne** in our organisation has personal responsibility for implementing and promoting these principles in their day-to-day dealings with colleagues.

Specific actions that EveryOne should display at all times in our workplace:

Be respectful at all times - Be mindful

Always act in a manner that demonstrates self respect and respect for others. Common social activities and practices that are comfortable for you may not be comfortable for everybody. Be mindful of the language you use and your behaviour, e.g., do not tell offensive jokes that may alienate those who are different from you - even if they are not present at the time.

Be actively aware of diversity / equality

There is more to diversity than meets the eye. No two people are identical. Diversity comes not only in the form of culture, race, and gender but also includes elements such as socio-economic background, education level, geographic location, and thought. Each of us brings a lifetime of experiences and knowledge to the table. **EveryOne** is different and we all add value to the organisation because of these differences.

Understand your own hidden biases and prejudices

Even if you have the best intentions, you might still unwittingly make assumptions based on stereotypes and biases. Identifying these cognitive barriers is critical. Welcome ideas that are different from your own, and support fellow colleagues. The creativity that comes with diversity can help you generate new ideas or improve a work process already in place. It can also make work more interesting and engaging.

Drive positive change in the Department

Do your part to create an inclusive climate and inclusive norms for your team and for our Department as a whole. Speak up when necessary to prevent exclusion, and create positive and ongoing ways for inclusive behaviour to become the norm.





6 Department Undertakings and Actions

In a number of specific areas, the Department commits to undertake the following actions:

Links with support organisations

Continue to forge alliances with relevant organisations such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to drive our commitment to an environment that embraces diversity, equality and inclusion.

Discussion forum

Establish a Diversity discussion and support forum across the Department to enable **EveryOne** input into policies, actions and best practice.

Fair & Consistent application of HR policies

Commitment to fair and consistent application of HR policies for **EveryOne**. Equal access to learning and development, mobility and other HR policies enable **EveryOne** to develop to their full potential.

Gender Balance

The Department will continue to work closely with the Gender Balance Steering Group to progress implementation of the Management Board's Action Plan.

The Department will implement the commitments on Gender Equality as set by the Government in accordance with the *Civil Service Renewal Plan*.

The Department will maintain alliances with organisations promoting gender balance such as The 30% Club and continue to forge similar alliances with other groups.

The Department will continue to input into the implementation of the *National Women and Girls Strategy 2017-2020* in respect of employment law.

Legal Commitments

Our Department is committed to meeting our legal obligations in relation to staff with disabilities to ensure equal opportunities for all our staff. In this regard our focus is on providing support to those of us who need special consideration, including people with physical, learning and mental health issues.

The Department will continue to recruit persons with disabilities and is committed to maintaining our legal employment ratio obligation of 3% of our workforce. For the calendar year 2017, the figure for the Department was 4.8%.

The Department will also liaise with the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration Strategies on the implementation of employment aspects of the *Migrant Integration Strategy* which was published by the Government in February 2017.



6 Department Undertakings and Actions

Awareness and Understanding

The Department will continue to work towards raising awareness and understanding of diversity, equality and inclusion.

Over the course of 2018, through the HR Newsletter, the Department will highlight and build awareness around the nine grounds of harassment and discrimination under the *Employment Equality Act 1998*.

The Department will continue to support the AHEAD (Association for Higher Education and Disability) - Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) programme, a work placement programme which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities. Through this programme, the Department currently provides mentored, paid work placements for 4 graduates (Executive Officer grade) with disabilities. HR Division will work with line managers with a view to doubling the number of placements available by 2020.

To build awareness and understanding of issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the workplace, HR Division will provide information and support to staff and line managers around best practice in supporting individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

The Department will consult with and build alliances with organisations such as the National Learning Network and IASE (Irish Association for Supported Employment), and will explore the provision of further placement and job shadowing opportunities across the country for people who have an illness or a disability. We will identify and explore the option of having 'Work Place Champions'. These champions will be individuals from our Department who volunteer or are selected to facilitate, advocate and promote meaningful work placements.

The Department will also work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to explore options to facilitate offering permanent employment to participants in these programmes where this option is beneficial to both the participant and the Department, and to ensure we maintain and build upon our current level.

Following a consultation process, the Department will publish guidelines setting out how we will give effect to providing better opportunities for people with physical and learning disabilities. These guidelines will be published by the end of 2018.

The Department will build alliances with non-governmental organisations to ensure that our policies and practices reflect best practice in supporting our LGBTQ+ colleagues.



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What can I do?

What can we do to address our inherent prejudices and biases?

Through this policy **EveryOne** should consider their own biases and behaviours. To assist **EveryOne**, HR Division (Learning & Development Unit) will focus on measures to highlight and remind staff of the importance of this policy and will consider learning opportunities for all staff. Through this process, we aim to identify examples of potentially biased behaviour, we are challenged to consider our behaviour and thinking processes and ensure on-going conversation and awareness about bias. By acknowledging and talking about our biases, we can provide an environment whereby we continuously consider our thought processes and judgements and the implications of our decisions. To support leadership in this area, Diversity training has already commenced in the Department at Senior Management level. All interview panel members are briefed on unconscious bias training before they sit on an interview board.

EveryOne has a responsibility to ensure that behaviour in our workplace reflects our culture of dignity and respect

What to do if you encounter discrimination or unfair treatment in our workplace

EveryOne has a responsibility to ensure that behaviour in our workplace reflects our culture of dignity and respect. **EveryOne** has a right to work in an environment free from unacceptable behaviour including any form of bullying or harassment. Aside from the impact upon the individual and colleagues, such behaviour can harm working relationships, undermine morale, and damage efficiency across the workplace.

If you experience unacceptable behaviour, you should consult the following processes for addressing such incidents and seek guidance and support from various options.

Dignity at Work

The Civil Service *Dignity at Work* Policy aims to promote respect, dignity, safety and equality in the workplace. **EveryOne** should be aware that all forms of bullying and harassment are unacceptable and all staff have a duty to behave in an acceptable and respectful manner.

The Policy encourages the early resolution of conflict that may arise in the workplace and supports the use of informal resolution methods, including local management and mediation in resolving issues in a timely manner. Anyone who experiences or witnesses unfair treatment in working life should consult the Dignity at Work Policy [here](#), which outlines the steps to be followed where issues arise.





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What can I do?

Employee and Line Manager Supports:

The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS)

The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) is a staff support service for civil servants which plays a key role in promoting staff wellness and organisational effectiveness. The CSEAS augments and supplements the work of HR Division and line management. The CSEAS provides a wide range of confidential supports to staff and management designed to assist staff to manage work and life difficulties, which, if left unattended, could adversely affect work performance and/or attendance and quality of life.

Further information on this service is available here: [CSEAS](#)

Employee Support Equality Unit

HR Division has a dedicated Employee Support Equality Unit that provides support and guidance to all staff at all times.

The Team is led by Catherine Halley, who is joined by Gerard Plunkett and Nuala Casey, who is Disability Liaison Officer:

Catherine Halley

Tel. 01-607 2225

Gerard Plunkett

Tel. 01-607 2519

Nuala Casey, Disability Liaison Officer

Tel. 01- 6072209 disabilityliaisonofficer@agriculture.gov.ie.

Review

This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is in line with Civil Service policies and best practice and reflects the needs and demands of the changing environment in which we live.