



Health Service Executive
National HR Capability and Culture
Diversity Equality
and Inclusion
Strategy
2022-24

1.0 Introduction

This strategy sets out the main priorities and supporting actions for the Health Service Executive to enhance the way in which Ireland's largest public sector employer addresses diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) for its workforce.

Developed to support the HSE's People Strategy 2019-2024 – this document sets out the rationale, strategic context and guiding principles for commitments to strengthen diversity, equality and inclusion in the way the HSE employs its staff.

During the lifetime of this strategy a wide range of enhancements will be made to infrastructure, policy and practice in order to provide a basis for the HSE to become a leader in DEI in the public sector in Ireland.

2.0 Methodology and rationale

The Health Services People Strategy 2019 – 2024¹ is the overarching national strategy setting out the future direction for the development of people services across the healthcare system. It is focused on the HSE's shared purpose – to deliver safer better healthcare and services that are valued by the public and by staff. A number of priorities set out in the People Strategy support the enhancement of DEI measures (see section 3.0 below).

The HSE DEI team was established in its current form in 2021. During 2022, the team developed a DEI Strategy to support the implementation of DEI measures outlined in the People Strategy, as well as the mainstreaming of DEI in the HSE up to 2024.

As the DEI Strategy was developed in 2022, three years after the publication of the Health Services People Strategy, a full consultation process was not undertaken due to the limited time frame for implementation. However, a series of strategy workshops were supported by internal HSE facilitators representing DEI networks throughout the HSE including Hospital Groups, Community Healthcare Organisations and National Services. This took place over a period of four months. In these workshops, through the medium of small group discussions, the DEI team assessed the strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness of DEI structures within the HSE, as well as factors arising from the external environment. Six strategic priorities were identified along with a series of actions for implementation. In addition to new and revised actions, the DEI Strategy also contains details of the continuation of certain DEI programmes and services already in existence.

The DEI team plan to undertake a wider consultation process for the next revision of the DEI Strategy.

¹ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hrstrategiesreports/people-strategy-2019-2024.html>

3.0 Strategic context

The HSE is committed to creating equality of opportunity at recruitment for all candidates, as part of an organisational culture where the contribution of every employee is valued and celebrated, where employees are treated with dignity and respect, and where discrimination in any form is not tolerated. The HSE's four core values of care, compassion, trust and learning encourage the development of such a culture.

The legislative framework is an essential starting point for a DEI Strategy, and in developing this document, the statutory requirements set out in national equality-related legislation relating to all public bodies i.e. those specified in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015; the Disability Act 2005 and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 were referenced and are reflected in this document.

Equality legislation offers protection to individuals under nine specific grounds:

- Age
- Civil status
- Disability
- Ethnicity, race and culture
- Family status
- Gender
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Membership of the Traveller community

The legislation also commits the HSE to taking proactive steps to eliminate the potential for discrimination from its day-to-day operations (the Public Sector Duty²).

This DEI Strategy explicitly supports the priorities identified in the People Strategy 2019-2024, with particular reference to those which most strongly enhance DEI across the organisation:

- Priority 1: Leadership and Culture
- Priority 2: Employee Experience
- Priority 3: Capability and Talent
- Priority 4: Workforce Planning and Integration
- Priority 6: Performance Accountability.

The implementation of this DEI Strategy will assist in delivering the People Strategy's vision to create an "exceptional employee experience that engages the talent and nurtures the leadership capability of all individuals and teams working together, in order to deliver safer better healthcare" for everyone.

² <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

The principles of Our Public Service 2020, the framework for development and innovation in Ireland's public service³, have also been considered in the development of this strategy. A number of factors were identified in relation to the mainstreaming of DEI principles within the HSE.

Size, scale and impact:

The HSE is the largest public sector employer in the state with significant resources, structures, and management processes to support the establishment of a diverse workforce. While its complexity and range of activities present a challenge, the HSE has a country-wide footprint with a presence in every locality, offering opportunities to recruit people into local services.

Leadership and culture:

Senior leadership in the HSE present a strong set of organisational values, and there is dedicated senior support for DEI measures across the workforce. There are opportunities to enhance the level of support and engagement from broader management structures in the organisation. In doing so DEI will have to compete with internal or external priorities such as COVID-19, the HSE cyberattack in 2021, or other resource constraints.

Policies, systems and legislation:

The HSE benefits from robust HR policies and strategies underpinning DEI principles e.g., the People Strategy, Values in Action. The equality-proofing of HSE workforce policies, both new and those due for revision, presents a particularly powerful opportunity for the mainstreaming of DEI into the day-to-day workings of the HSE.

Communications, technology and data:

There are effective organisation-wide internal and external channels for DEI communications in the HSE. Work continues to consolidate workforce demographic data to support DEI measures (as well as statutory compliance), and the HSE is likely to see the benefit of DEI awareness raising and promotion.

Learning, training and resources:

The effectiveness and accessibility of the HSeLanD platform for e-learning provides an excellent opportunity for the enhancement of DEI education. Continued development of the training offered to staff allows for training materials and content to keep up with rapidly-evolving terminology and concepts relating to DEI. An expanding range of online resources present an opportunity to provide staff and managers with tailored support and guidance.

³ <https://www.ops.gov.ie/what-is-ops2020/overview/>

4.0 Guiding principles

The principles of diversity, equality and inclusion provide the guiding framework for the development of this HSE DEI Strategy and will continue to act as a reference point throughout the implementation process. These principles will also support the development of future revisions of the DEI Strategy.

Diversity

- We aim to achieve diversity in the workforce that reflects the population we serve, recognising the richness of difference that supports innovation and creativity across the organisation.

Equality

- We commit to meeting legislative requirements relating to equality, and to proactively removing barriers so that we create true equality of opportunity and outcome as an employer.

Inclusion

- We aim to create an organisational culture where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, they are empowered to bring their whole selves to work, and they are aware that what they do and say makes a difference.

5.0 Monitoring and Implementation

The DEI team will monitor implementation of all actions. Targets will be developed together with appropriate indicators against which the outputs and impact of the strategy's actions will be measured. The strategy is a living document and can be modified to respond to evolving needs. Progress reports will be prepared periodically and an annual report on implementation progress for each year of the Strategy will also be developed. A review of the strategy will take place in 2024.

6.0 Priorities

The six HSE DEI strategic priorities are closely aligned with the priorities outlined in the Health Services People Strategy 2019 – 2024. All six strategic priorities are of equal importance, are underpinned by the principles of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, and collectively support the development of an organisational culture where employees are valued and supported, and work in an environment free from discrimination. The following section outlines the specific actions to be implemented under each of the HSE DEI priorities up to the year 2024.

The six priorities are as follows:

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| Priority 1 | Develop the knowledge and skills of managers and staff in the HSE relating to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion |
| Priority 2 | Strengthen the voice of employees representing all diversity characteristics, through enhanced feedback and staff engagement |
| Priority 3 | Develop systems and processes to gather quantitative workforce diversity data and enhance the mechanisms for reporting on workforce diversity |
| Priority 4 | Enhance HSE workforce policies and processes through a programme of equality-proofing, and develop new policies to advance DEI where appropriate |
| Priority 5 | Increase the level of communication and awareness-raising in order to promote initiatives that encourage DEI |
| Priority 6 | Strengthen the support, advice and guidance provided to individual staff and managers on DEI matters, and use the evidence gathered to facilitate broader developments in DEI |



Headline actions to implement these priorities are shown in Section 7.0 below.

7.0 Actions

<p>Priority 1: Develop the knowledge and skills of managers and staff in the HSE relating to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion <i>Implementing People Strategy priorities 1,3</i></p>
Enhance the DEI training offering for all staff.
Enhance the Induction programme with appropriate introduction to DEI concepts, legislation and resources, including employee networks, reasonable accommodations and accessibility in the workplace
Increase awareness of unconscious bias during the recruitment and selection process
Ensure that there is greater awareness of the need for Reasonable Accommodations at all levels and throughout the employee life cycle, and how to access this facility
Increase awareness of DEI resources available through the DEI Hub on HSeLanD and the HSE web page
Raise awareness of the role of HSE managers and staff in meeting legislative requirements relating to DEI
Raise awareness of appropriate language and terminology to be used in HSE workplaces

<p>Priority 2: Strengthen the voice of employees representing all diversity characteristics, through enhanced feedback and staff engagement <i>Implementing People Strategy priorities 1,2</i></p>
Develop a range of support networks for staff with different diversity characteristics
Support the participation of diverse staff in employee networks and other activities that strengthen employee voice including staff surveys
Develop allyship roles and structures to enhance the employee voice and provide informal support for staff and managers on DEI issues
Develop processes to gather and use evidence and feedback from employee networks to inform DEI initiatives

**Priority 3:
Develop systems and processes to gather quantitative workforce diversity data and enhance the mechanisms for reporting on workforce diversity**
Implementing People Strategy priority 4

Develop systems for gathering data about disability in the workforce to support statutory reporting requirements relating to the Disability Act 2005

Improve the collation and reporting of workforce diversity data in general, including exploring processes to capture and evaluate diversity data during the recruitment and selection process

Support the development of more targeted recruitment and selection to enhance opportunities available to under-represented groups

Priority 4: Enhance HSE workforce policies and processes through a programme of equality-proofing, and develop new policies to advance DEI where appropriate

Implementing People Strategy priorities 1,6

Support the enhancement of policies and guidelines relating to the accessibility and inclusiveness of general HSE communications

Enhance and develop HR and other workforce-related policies through comprehensive equality proofing and staff engagement with a diverse range of employees

Work in partnership with key functions of the HSE to identify and remove barriers to accessibility for HSE employees where reasonable, including workplace environments, resources and technology

Develop a comprehensive Reasonable Accommodations policy

**Priority 5:
Increase the level of communication and awareness-raising in order to promote initiatives that encourage DEI**

Implementing People Strategy priority 1

Enhance communication structures across the HSE to support improved effectiveness of awareness-raising about DEI matters, through developing staff networks and other engagement

Increase the level of communication and awareness-raising relating to DEI across the HSE, e.g. employee networks, Pride, International Women's Day, International Day for People With Disabilities

Encourage greater local staff participation in DEI-related activities and initiatives

Develop a range of resources (e.g. guidelines, briefings for use in team meetings) to support the development of local DEI initiatives

Priority 6:

Strengthen the support, advice and guidance provided to individual managers and staff on DEI matters, and use the evidence gathered to facilitate broader developments in DEI

Implementing People Strategy priorities 2,3

Promote the availability of advice and guidance on DEI enquiries for all managers and staff

Enhance the reporting of DEI issues in the workplace and develop processes for using this data in other DEI activities, such as equality-proofing

Enhance the development and support available to HSE staff with diverse characteristics, by increasing the range and diversity of coachees and coaches.

8.0 Further details and contact information

The DEI team can be contacted at Diversity.HR@hse.ie.

Information about DEI in the HSE can be found on the DEI web page at <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/procedures-guidelines/diversity-equality-and-inclusion/> and also on the DEI Hub on HSeLanD, at <https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/PreLogin>.

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