



An tÚdarás Árachas Sláinte The Health Insurance Authority

Equality and Diversity Policy

Version 1

Summary	<p>This policy provides a framework for the Health Insurance Authority to meet the requirements of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.</p> <p>The policy demonstrates the Authority's commitment to equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice both in the provision of services and as an employer.</p>
Target Audience/Stakeholders	Authority employees and members of the Public
Issue Date	2019
Approved & ratified by:	Members of the Authority @ February 2019 Meeting
Next Review Date	February 2023

1. Introduction

The Health Insurance Authority (“the Authority”) is committed to equality of opportunity in all its policies, practices and services.

We aim to ensure that no Member, employee, consumer, or stakeholder experiences less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling Community, in terms of recruitment, employment or accessing the Authority’s services.

Equality of opportunity is an integral part of the Authority’s overall policy and relies on the contribution of management and staff in ensuring the overall effectiveness of the application of the policy. While equal opportunities are formally assigned as an integral part of the responsibility of management, all staff are encouraged to promote equality for all in the workplace.

2. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

2.1 Equality

This policy seeks to ensure that the Authority and the services provided:

- Is free from discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment or victimisation;
- Accommodates diversity across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation and meets the needs that are specific to particular groups of customers;
- Makes reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities; and
- Seeks to benefit all customers from across the nine grounds by promoting equality and implementing positive action where necessary.

The 9 equality grounds detailed under the Employment Equality legislation are as follows:

- **Gender:** a man, a woman or transgender person;
- **Civil Status:** covering a person who is single, married, separated, divorced or widowed, in a civil partnership or previously in a civil partnership;
- **Family Status:** covering a person who is pregnant, a parent of a person under 18 or the resident primary carer or a parent of a person with a disability;
- **Sexual Orientation:** a person’s sexual orientation including gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual ;
- **Religion:** Covering different religious belief, background or none;
- **Age:** a person’s age, this does not apply to a person aged under 16;
- **Disability:** Covering people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions;
- **Race:** Encompassing race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin; and
- **Traveller Community:** recognised as an ethnic group.

The Authority aims to ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against for any reason with regard to employment or accessing its services.

2.2 Aims

The Authority's Equality and Diversity Policy will work to ensure that everyone who interacts with the Authority is:

- Treated fairly and without discrimination throughout their dealings with the Authority;
- Treated equally in a healthy and safe environment free from hazards; and
- Treated with dignity and respect in a fair and consistent manner in an environment where inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable.

2.3 Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, all applicants for employment, Members of the Authority and all those who work on behalf of the Authority (e.g. contractors), and relates to all areas of employment practice including recruitment and selection, training and development, progression (including promotion), pay, employment conditions and retention.
- All service users, visitors, customers and clients of the Authority, and relates to all services provided by the Authority in its activities both internal and external.

2.4 Other Policies

This policy should be read and is operated in conjunction with:

- Codes of Conduct (for both Staff and Members);
- Health & Safety Policies;
- Anti – Harassment/Anti-Bullying Policy (in relation to staff and in relation to customers); and
- Customer Charter and Action Plan

Staff should also refer to the Authority's Employee Handbook and the principles contained to maintain a positive working environment.

3. SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

3.1 Employment

The Authority is committed to equal opportunity of employment and all employment decisions will be based on merit, qualifications and abilities. Employee rights under the Employment Equality Act

are guaranteed and no one will receive less favourable treatment than someone else because of their gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling Community.

This Equality & Diversity Policy is underpinned by the numerous Equal opportunities, Health & Safety Policies and Codes of Conduct (for both Staff and Members) already embedded in the Authority's structure. The Authority will ensure that the principles of employment equality are applied to recruitment, promotion, training, career development and to all terms and conditions of employment.

The Authority will strive to achieve equality of opportunity by continuously monitoring its employment practices to ensure that it creates a positive working environment at all times.

The Authority's selection procedures provide equal access at all stages to all candidates.

3.2 Employment of people with disabilities

Public sector bodies are obliged under the Disability Act 2005

- To promote and support the employment of people with disabilities;
- To ensure, where practicable, that 3% of all staff employed are people with disabilities; and
- To report every year on the number and percentage of employees with disabilities.

The Disability Act 2005 defines disability as:

Disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the persons to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the state by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

In order to meet its legal responsibility the Authority collects data from staff on an annual basis. This information is used for statistical purposes only and all information is stored securely and confidentially. Employees have a legal right to see the information on record about their disability status and to seek to alter it if they believe it is no longer accurate, in line with the Authority's data protection policy.

4. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Training

A balanced participation by both men and women in the training opportunities open to them will be encouraged and extraneous factors will not influence training decisions.

4.2 Promotion

The Authority's promotion procedures will not discriminate under the 9 equality grounds detailed under the Employment Equality legislation.

Management will ensure that all staff are aware of career/promotional opportunities by circulating details and posting them at obvious points throughout the organisation.

4.3 Grievances

The Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts provides protection for individuals who, in good faith, have acted in pursuance of a claim under any of those Acts. The Authority will treat all complaints by individuals with fairness and sensitivity and in as confidential a manner as possible.

5. MONITORING AND REVIEWING THIS POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed periodically to reflect legal standards, government policy and practice and will be ideally reviewed every 4 years. The review will evaluate the effective operation of this policy and improve existing practices and procedures where inequalities have been found or alleged to exist.

The Authority will report on implementation of this policy in its Annual Report.