

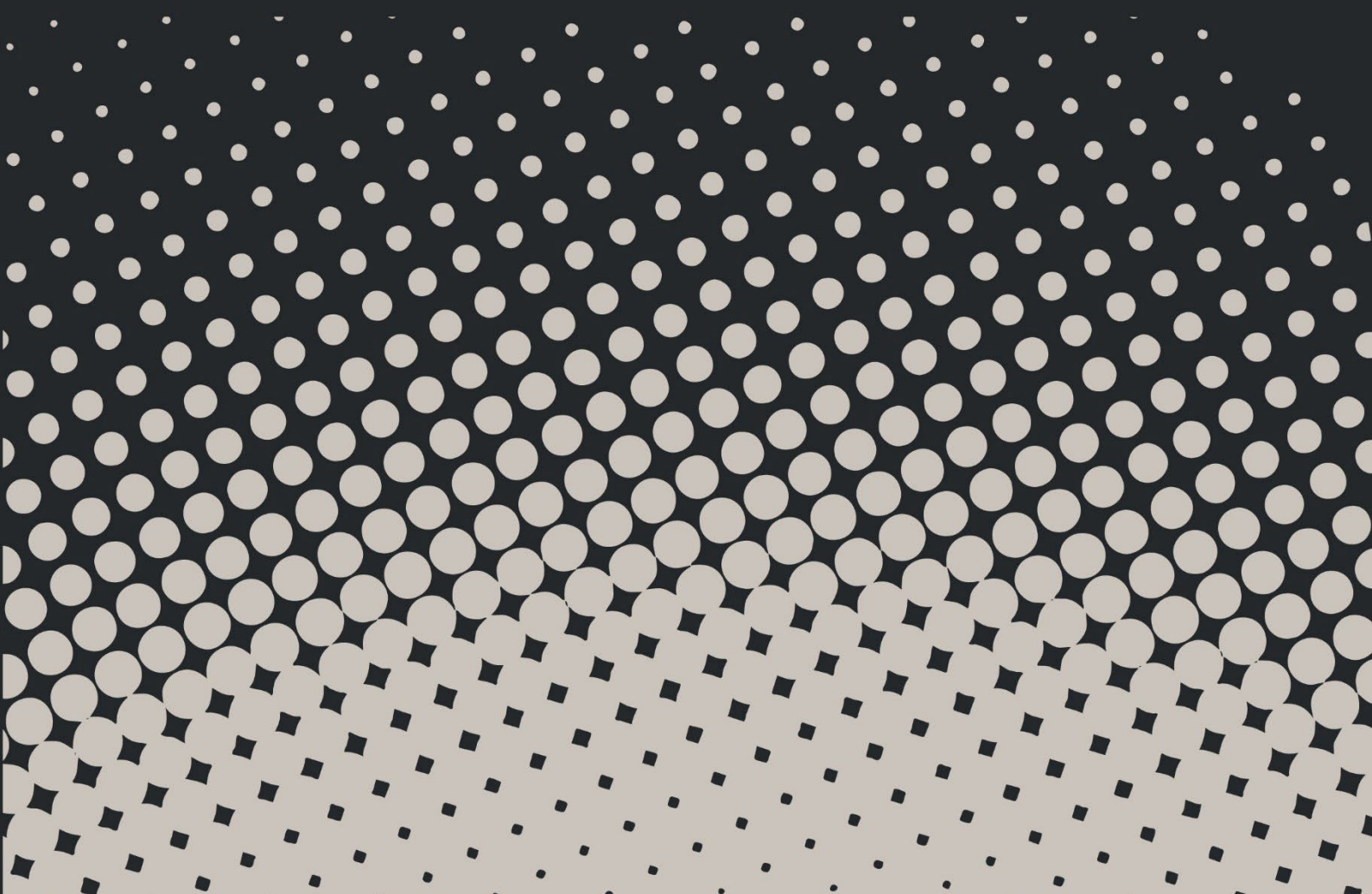


Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Account of Equality Review carried out by Gymnastics Ireland

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

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The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was established under statute on 1 November 2014 to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland, to promote a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding, to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality, and to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses and discrimination.

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Glossary

2014 Act: Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014

DEIB: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

EOO: Equality of Opportunity

ESA: Equal Status Act 2000 to 2018

GI: Gymnastics Ireland

Protected Grounds:

- › Age
- › Civil Status
- › Disability
- › Family Status
- › Gender
- › Membership of the Traveller Community
- › Race
- › Religion
- › Sexual Orientation

Introduction

The Commission invited Gymnastics Ireland ('GI') under section 32(1)(a) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act') to carry out an equality review in relation to the level of equal opportunity that exists in relation to Gymnastics Ireland's provision of services, under the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018 (the 'ESA').

This account provides a summary description of the Equality Review undertaken by Gymnastics Ireland in relation to this issue.

The reasons for requesting the Equality Review

In September 2023, GI published a statement advising that it had appointed an independent expert to review its policies and procedures, which resulted in a series of recommendations that GI was fully committed to implementing.

Following on from that independent expert review, the Commission invited GI to carry out an equality review. In inviting GI to conduct an equality review, the Commission was not seeking to revisit or to examine any individual complaint of discrimination made to GI. Rather, the Commission requested that the equality review focus more generally on the structures and practices that GI has put in place following its independent expert review.

Invitation to conduct an Equality Review

The Commission invited GI to conduct an equality review by completing an audit of the level of equality of opportunity ('EOO') that exists in relation to GI's provision of services, under the ESA. The Commission invited GI to examine its practices, and the procedures that it has in place to promote EOO generally in the provision of services.

On 20 December 2023, the Commission wrote to GI inviting it to undertake an equality review. In particular, the Commission invited GI to:

- › identify all relevant current practices and procedures that relate to promotion of EOO by GI in the provision of services;
- › assess the effectiveness of these practice and procedure in promoting EOO;
- › identify and assess the practices and procedures that GI utilises to handle complaints raising an allegation of discrimination;
- › identify whether any issues of EOO arise; and
- › outline any recommendations and/or findings from the equality review.

Timeframe

GI completed and delivered the equality review to the Commission in March 2024. The Commission engaged further with GI with follow up questions in September 2024. GI provided substantive response to these additional queries in October 2024.

In December 2024, the Commission decided that GI's response to the invitation to complete an equality review was satisfactory, and that no further action is required under the 2014 Act.

Scope of the Equality Review

As part of the equality review process, GI:

- › identified policies and procedures that relate to EOO in the provision of services and assessed their effectiveness in terms of EOO;
- › identified and assessed the practices and procedures that GI currently utilises to handle complaints where allegations of discrimination on any of the protected grounds under the ESA could be made. The nature of the GI complaints and disciplinary process had already been the subject of recommendations by independent expert review. GI worked to implement the changes identified by the independent expert review as part of the equality review process;
- › developed an audit questionnaire to guide the assessment of whether GI's practices were conducive to the promotion of EOO;

- › carried out an audit into whether GI's practices were conducive to the promotion of EOO. This audit included conducting interviews with GI staff, identifying the operational areas and activities of GI in the context of EOO, and examining sports specific codes and practices for a National Sports Governing Body specific to the strategic plan for the promotion of EOO;
- › identified other relevant factors material to GI and assessed whether they were conducive to the promotion of EOO.

This included:

- compiling list of programmes designed and delivered by GI to ascertain which programmes promoted EOO and identification of any barriers existing in other programmes;
- examining the process to access membership, GI activities, competitions and other activities to assess if any barriers to EOO existed;
- reviewing the process for selecting athletes and their impact on EOO;
- reviewing communications materials including social media, webpages, and printed material, to identify if EOO is promoted;
- assessing training and education courses to identify gaps and opportunities in relation to promoting EOO;
- identifying any awards and conferences that are relevant to GI's promotion of EOO;
- considering the visibility and awareness of promotion of Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB);
- garnering overall attitudes of management to EOO and DEIB across each operational area; and
- identifying any barriers that may exist, including access to funding and resources, to further enhance promotion of EOO across the organisation.

Findings of the Equality Review

The findings of the Equality Review identified certain measures to be taken by GI.

This included:

- › making recommended changes to GI's written policies to address EOO and DEIB;
- › making recommended changes to the GI Complaints and Disciplinary Policy;
- › adopting a new DEIB Strategy and Policy Statement, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, and Anti-Bullying Policy;
- › providing EOO training, anti-racism training and unconscious bias training;
- › creating a new staff position with responsibility for equality and diversity;
- › creating an option to collect 'equality data' as part of GI new proposed membership portal, to inform GI of the demographic of its membership; and
- › making recommended DEIB amendments to the Strategic Plan 2021-2024 to be adopted in the new Strategic Plan commencing in 2025.

Following further engagement with GI, in October 2024 GI confirmed that the following additional actions had been taken:

- › Developed a new DEIB Strategy
 - A new DEIB Strategy was completed and launched in early June 2024 along with supporting policies and a new 'A Place for All' inclusive community charter. Further, GI indicated that it planned to create a new DEIB sub-committee. It stated that GI is in the process of defining the Terms of Reference for, and the appointment of suitably qualified individuals to, a new DEIB sub-committee who will be responsible for the delivery & oversight of the DEIB Strategy.
- › Appointed a new Safe Sport and Integrity Manager
 - A new Safe Sport and Integrity Manager was appointed, who has specific responsibility in relation to the operationalisation of the DEIB strategy and also the Discipline and Complaints policy/process. Recruitment was completed with the new staff member joining GI in April 2024.
- › Appointed a new Director of Community Support and Operations

- A new Director of Community Support and Operations was appointed, who the SafeSport and Integrity Manager reports directly to, and who heads up a directorate that includes the areas of Safe Sport and Integrity, Discipline and Complaints and Risk and Compliance. Recruitment was completed with the new staff member joining GI in August 2024.
- › Provided EOO training (anti-racism and unconscious bias) for all Board, staff and key programme contractors/members.
 - GI indicated that this has been completed with approx. 59 individuals attending / due to attend a course in the short-term.
- › Planned EOO training (anti-racism and unconscious bias) for GI's club network.
 - GI indicated that this training would be rolled out as part of their annual GI Exchange club support conference starting the week commencing 28 October 2024.

Conclusion

The Commission welcomes GI positive engagement with the equality review process. In particular, the Commission welcomes the commitment demonstrated by GI to undertake a detailed equality review process. The Commission acknowledges GI commitment to strive to be a sector leader in their approach to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging and congratulates them on their efforts.

The Commission notes the recommendations arising from the Equality Review to address these findings and welcomes the actions GI have taken on foot of the equality review. In particular, the Commission welcomes the adoption of new DEIB strategy and appointment of new staff members with specific responsibility for DEIB.

In engagement with GI during the equality review process, the Commission raised and received further clarification from GI on a number of issues, including:

- › Stakeholder Engagement
 - In conducting any equality review, the Commission considers that targeted and meaningful consultation with stakeholders, in particular, service users is a helpful and informative tool. The Commission notes that GI did not undertake a consultation process as part of this equality review. In further correspondence, GI indicated that it intends to carry out surveys with members as part of its new DEIB Strategy; and
- › Complaints and Disciplinary Policy
 - The updated Complaints and Disciplinary Policy provides that, when submitting a complaint to GI including a discrimination complaint, the complainant should pay a fee. In further correspondence, GI stated that it considered it necessary to retain the fee, noting that the Complaints and Disciplinary Policy includes a clause to waive the complaints fee. GI informed the Commission that it has waived the complaints fee on multiple occasions. GI also noted that the Complaints and Disciplinary Policy does not preclude the right of any person to

- make a complaint of discrimination under the ESA to the Workplace Relations Commission and that any such complaint does not require a fee.
 - The submission of a legal complaint alleging discrimination under the ESA to the Workplace Relations Commission is unrelated to the operation of an individual organisation's complaint and disciplinary policy. The Commission is concerned that that a fee could be a barrier for an individual submitting a complaint to GI under the Complaints and Disciplinary Policy and hopes that GI exercises maximum flexibility in relation to the application of the waiver to complaints of discrimination.
- › Building on recommendations
 - The Commission further notes the further work planned by GI to build on the recommendations of the equality review, including the preparation of a new Transgender and Non-Binary Inclusion Policy and the roll out of a new membership system which will allow GI to enhance its DEIB data capture for members.



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The Irish Human Rights and Equality
Commission.

16 – 22 Sráid na Faiche,
Baile Átha Cliath, D07 CR20
16 – 22 Green Street,
Dublin, D07 CR20

Guthán / Phone +353 (0) 1 858 3000

Riomhpost / Email info@ihrec.ie

Idirlíon / Web www.ihrec.ie

✕ @_ihrec

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