



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



**Cork  
City Council**  
Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí

# **Implementing the Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty in Cork City Council**

**IHREC Offices, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7**  
**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

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**A/Director of People & Organisation Development**

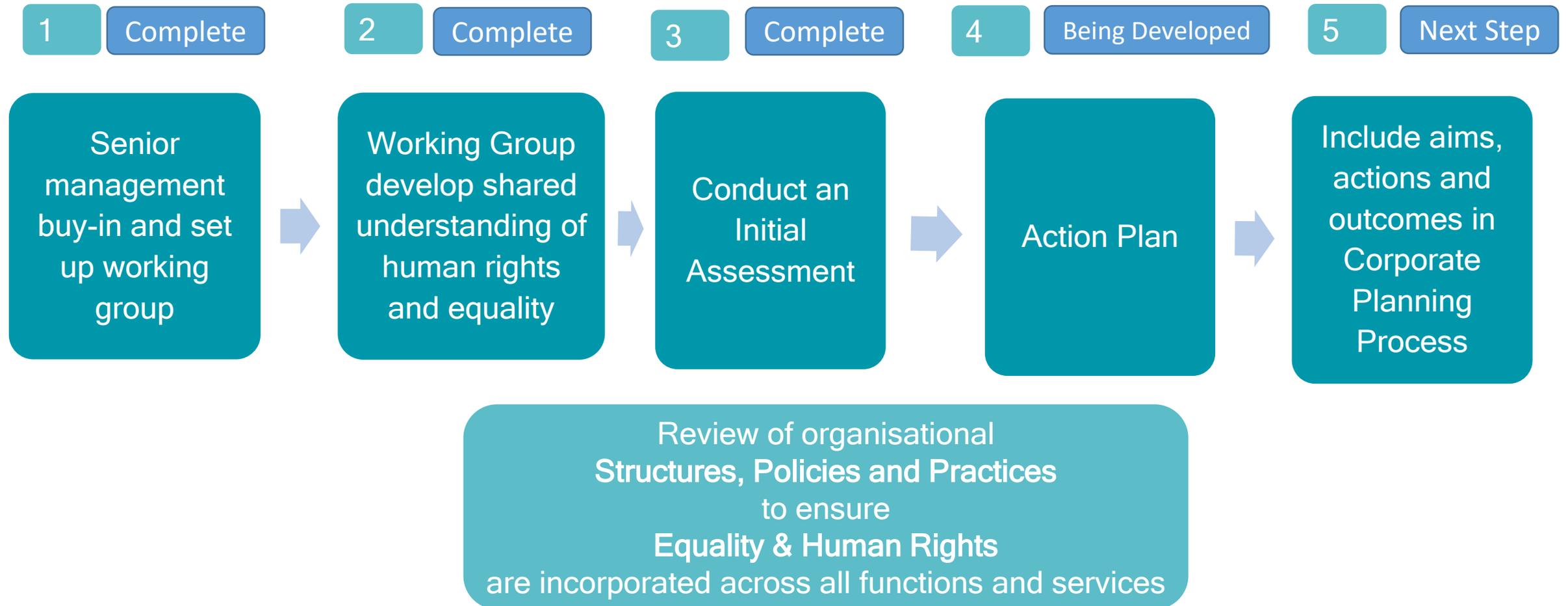
# Scope of the Project

- Identify and build on human rights and equality infrastructure already in place
- Assess the human rights and equality issues across all Council functions and services for both customers and staff
- Avail of the expertise and experience of IHREC staff to proof current policies and procedures against best practise in the area
- Put in place policies, plans and actions to address the issues identified

# Process undertaken to Date

- Presentation by IHREC to Senior Management Team on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017 to explain Public Sector Duty and outline Pilot Project process
- The reasons why Cork City Council put itself forward to be a pilot urban authority - vision, objectives and values
- The importance of Senior Management Team commitment from the outset to ensure public sector duty ethos is embedded in the activities of Cork City Council
- Ensuring that equality and human rights are integral to the upcoming Corporate Planning Process

# Steps for pilot:

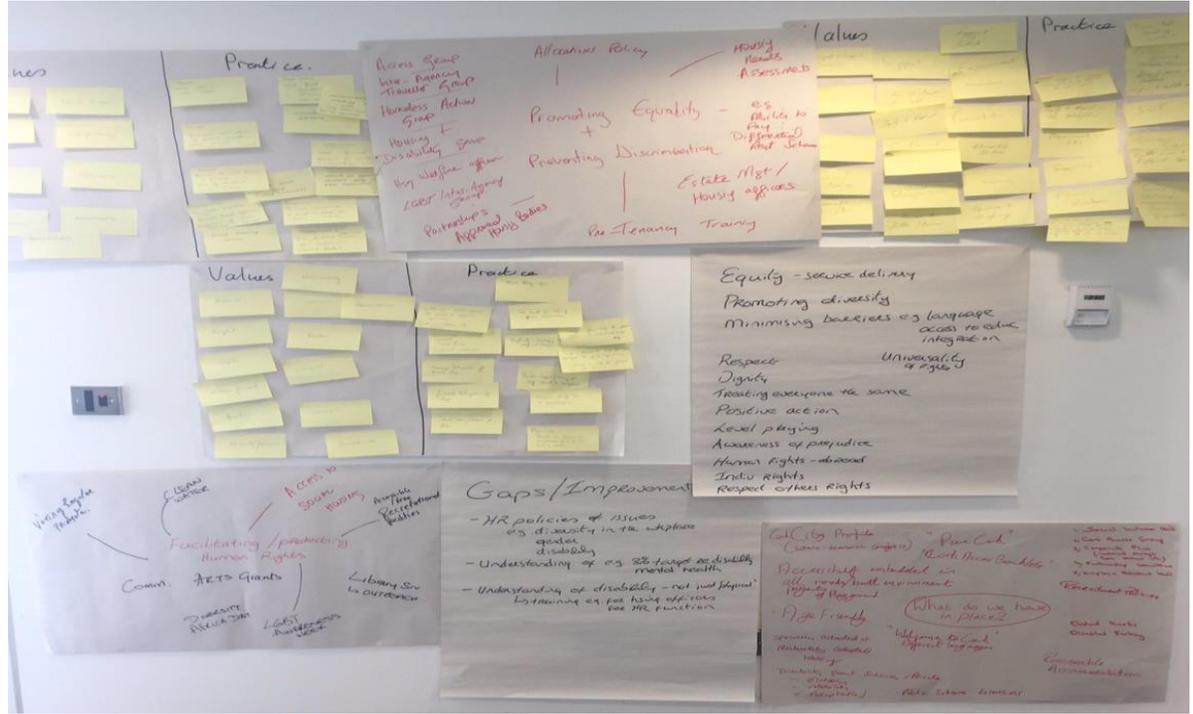


# Setting Up of the Working Group

- Develop a shared understanding of what equality and human rights means to Cork City council
- Group of seven members selected from the following cross-section of Directorates to cover a wide range City Council activities
  - ❖ *Community, Culture & Placemaking*
  - ❖ *Environment & Recreation*
  - ❖ *Housing*
  - ❖ *Roads & Transportation*
  - ❖ *Corporate Affairs*
  - ❖ *People & Organisation Development*

# Workshop 1

- 2 Questions:
  - What equality and human rights values are important for Cork City Council?
  - What do these values mean in practice for Cork City Council?



# Workshop 1: Defining Human Rights and Equality Values that are important to Cork City Council

- ❖ Respect and Dignity
- ❖ Diversity and Inclusion
- ❖ Participation and Engagement
- ❖ Equal access and fair treatment
- ❖ Transparency

# Workshop 1: What do these values mean in practice for Cork City Council?

- Communications / Consultations- internal & public
- Customer focus at all levels
- Access to information, FOI
- Community networking
- Fairness- consistent application of policies and procedures
- Taking diversity into account while applying rules
- Transparency in application processes
- Encourage and facilitate participation of minority groups
- “door always open” ethos
- Free events
- Safe space for staff to be diverse
- Empowering staff in decision ownership
- HR policies- Dignity at Work, Code of Conduct etc.
- Provision of supports and training
- Job/promotion opportunities (equitable access)
- Office space itself- working environment

# Workshop 2: Current Human Rights and Equality Policies and Practices

- Various council services protect peoples human rights (e.g. right to health and environmental protections etc.)
- Provision of social, recreational and educational services
- Provision of social housing and associated policies
- Social Inclusion, Outreach and welfare policies, access groups
- Traveller engagement
- Human resources policies; equality, dignity at work, open and fair recruitment processes, reasonable accommodation etc.
- Public consultations and LCDC representation
- Voter registration
- Diversity and inclusion events- LGBT awareness, Africa Day etc.

# Assessment: Human Resources / Corporate Services

Issue	Related value
Diversity in workplace (disability, gender, ethnicity)	Diversity and Inclusion
Gender - promotional opportunities in workplace	Diversity and Inclusion
Dignity at work - lack of awareness of policy and procedures	Dignity and Respect
Staff consultation	Participation and Engagement
Networking across organisation internally	Participation and Engagement
Training and capacity around human rights and equality for staff	Participation and Engagement
Development opportunities for staff	Participation and Engagement
Language and training around cultural diversity for staff	Diversity and Inclusion
Staff access to their own personal information in HR	Transparency
Staff well being and mental health and in the workplace	Dignity and Respect
Quality of work for people with disabilities in workplace	Equality, Equal Access and Fair Treatment/ Participation and Engagement

# Assessment: Service Delivery

Issue	Related value
Estate management- residents' participation and consultation	Participation and Engagement
Accessibility of playgrounds and recreational facilities (for children, elderly, disabled)	Diversity and Inclusion
Accessibility not embedded in all projects from design stages	Diversity and Inclusion
Recognising customer profile of the Council has changed in recent years	Diversity and Inclusion
Understanding what groups are not accessing services	Participation and Engagement
Public realm areas- accessibility improvements	Diversity and Inclusion/ Participation and Engagement

# Assessment: Service Delivery cont.

Issue	Related value
Consultation with disability groups on public realm	Participation and Engagement
Raising awareness with public about Council's services in customer accessible way	Participation and Engagement
Web design accessibility	Diversity and Inclusion
Anti-social behaviour- staff management of	Dignity and Respect
Frontline staff understanding cultural differences of customers	Diversity and Inclusion
Equality proofing services	Equality, Equal Access and Fair Treatment

# Assessment: Policy Making / Implementation

Issue	Related value
Consideration of equality built into project systems from beginning in formalised way	Equality, Equal Access and Fair Treatment
Understanding of Social Inclusion	Diversity and Inclusion
Are aims of Social Inclusion Unit mainstreamed across the organisation	Diversity and Inclusion
How human rights and equality are represented in Corporate Plan, principles and practice of organisation	Transparency
Checklist could be built into systems for all new projects to consider equality and human rights impacts	Transparency
Challenges in relation to Housing Supply	Participation and Engagement

# Staff Engagement / Consultation Event:

- A full day staff engagement/consultation event.
- Extremely Interactive Workshop with more than 40 staff from all grades in the Council.
- Very valuable feedback as part of assessment process.
- IHREC film crew in attendance.

# Workshop 3: Prioritisation of Issues & Actions and Developing Action Plan

- Changing Role of Local Authorities – Putting People First – significantly greater focus on community role of local authorities
- The importance of treating all people with whom we engage with Dignity and Respect – internal and external
- Staff Awareness & Training on Equality and Human Rights Issues
- Staff Engagement Survey with particular reference to staff experiences and perceptions in relation to dignity, diversity, disability and mental health matters
- Communication and Consultation Strategy with customers and stakeholders

# Progress to date on Implementation of Public Sector Duty

- 1. Implementation of new People Strategy for Local Authority Sector, highlighting the following key action points:**
  - Embed Public Sector Duty values into organisation plans and activities
  - Promote and support a culture of dignity, respect and equality
  - Communicate and consult effectively with employees on key organisational activities and plans

# Progress to date on Implementation of Public Sector Duty

## 2. Delivering extensive Boundary Extension for Cork City incorporating:

- Five-fold increase in total area of city
- Increase in population of 85,000 from 125,000 to 210,000
- Increase in staff numbers of 210. Key areas of activity: Staff engagement, site visits, matching skillsets to roles, staff induction & integration
- Integration of new, diverse communities into newly expanded city.

### Key initiatives:

- ✓ Targeted approach to integration of new communities supported by HSE & Gardai
- ✓ Meet and Greet undertaken with community and voluntary groups in largest communities
- ✓ Lord Mayors reception for new communities
- ✓ Family Fun Day with community groups

# Progress to date on Implementation of Public Sector Duty

## 3. Staff Engagement Survey

What we do well:

- Proud to work for City Council – 91%
- Staff are treated with Dignity & Respect – 85%
- Work/Life Balance Initiatives – 84%
- Staff engaged with work – 91%

Areas to focus on:

- Clearer communication at Senior Level
- Staff contribution to Decision Making

Next Step: Constitute focus groups to action survey findings

# Progress to date on Implementation of Public Sector Duty

## **4. Social Inclusion Initiatives**

- “Shape Your City” – voter registration campaign aimed at foreign workers and immigrants new to Cork City
- Pilot social inclusion joint initiative between Cork City Council and HSE (Cork Kerry Community Healthcare) in relation to event organisation & promotion, training & learning activities

## **5. Staff Professional Development in relation to Public Sector Duty**

- To date, three City Council staff members have undertaken the Professional Diploma in Human Rights & Equality

# Progress to date on Implementation of Public Sector Duty

## 6. Staff Wellbeing Programme

- The City Council has implemented a staff wellbeing programme covering the triad of physical activity, mental health and nutrition

## 7. Corporate Planning

- The Council will shortly be preparing a new Corporate Plan for 2019-2024. This process will involve extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders, and will be mindful of the objectives of the Council's LECP – Pure Cork and the People Strategy. Key learning from the assessment undertaken to date in the rollout of the Public Sector Duty will strongly inform the plan's commitment to social inclusion, equality and human rights actions over the lifetime of the plan

# Tangible Outcomes of Pilot

- Best Practice captured and incorporated
- Human Rights and Equality improved for Cork City Council staff and customers
- The City Council provides an enhanced range of services to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse customer base in an expanded city
- Significantly extended communication and engagement structures with staff and stakeholders
- Cork City Council continues to attract, develop, retain and promote high calibre staff
- Expertise and guidance from IHREC on getting started with implementation of the Public Sector Duty proved invaluable

# Tangible Outcomes of Pilot cont.

- Better awareness of the Duty throughout the Local Authority Sector
- IHREC better informed and equipped to advise and guide public bodies going forward
- Cork City Council embeds the Public Sector Duty into its People Strategy and into its Corporate Planning Process
- The ultimate aim is that equality and human rights matters evolve from statutory duty on public bodies to an integral part of organisational culture - 'The way we do things around here'