



# Equal Status Policy



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY  
AN TÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

## The Equal Status Act, 2000

- Promotes equality of opportunity,
- Prohibits discrimination subject to exemptions on nine specified grounds,
- Prohibits sexual harassment and harassment on the discriminatory grounds,
- Requires the reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities and
- Allows for a wide range of positive actions.

### Grounds

- The nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited are:  
Gender, marital status, family status, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion, race and membership of the Traveller community.

## The Equal Status Act, 2000 applies to

- Buying, selling or renting a wide variety of goods and services
- Buying, selling or renting accommodation etc.
- Educational establishments.

The principle features of the legislation are set out in the accompanying Guide to the Equal Status Act, 2000 and this policy should be read in conjunction with this guide. Further information on the Equal Status Act, 2000 can be obtained from our information service. Lo-call: 1890 245545 or Tel: 01 4173333

The Equal Status Act, 2000 applies to the Equality Authority where it provides a wide range of goods and services to the public and also on the occasions where it allows the use of its premises for functions.

## Commitment

We endeavour to provide an excellent service and to do this the expertise of all our staff is crucial. We seek to equip all our staff with the knowledge and expertise to deal confidently with the issues involved and to be professional in dealing with customers. We desire to have a well motivated workforce which takes pride in our work.

This Equal Status Policy sets out our commitment to meet our obligations under the Equal Status Act, 2000, to proactively promote equality and to work to prevent discrimination. In this we seek to ensure:

- That the service we provide is free from discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment and victimisation;
- That all customers, service providers and employees are treated with respect and dignity;
- That the service we provide is accessible and relevant;
- That the service accommodates diversity and seeks to meet needs specific to particular groups of customers;
- That the service seeks to benefit all across the nine grounds by promoting equality and implementing positive action;
- That discrimination, sexual harassment or harassment of or by the staff employed in the Equality Authority and non-employees such as customers and business contacts, will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action (in the case of employees) and other sanctions, for example the suspension of contracts or services or exclusion from premises (in the case of non-employees); and
- That complaints by customers will be treated with fairness and sensitivity and in as confidential a manner as possible.

This policy should be read, and is operated, in conjunction with the Equality Authority's

policies on health and safety, on sexual harassment, harassment and bullying and on employment equality.

The Equality Authority has adopted and implemented this policy after consultation about its content with the staff employed in the Equality Authority and organisations and groups representing the nine grounds.

## Actions

### 1. Materials

This policy and all of the Equality Authority's materials are provided in a relevant and accessible manner to people from across the nine grounds. We provide materials on our website, by audio, Braille and in various languages. Particular attention in this regard is given to core materials providing information on the equality legislation and its implementation.

### 2. Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities

The Equality Authority has an obligation to reasonably accommodate customers with disabilities by providing special treatment or facilities so that it is not impossible or unduly difficult for the customer to avail of the service. This obligation is limited to the extent that there is no obligation to provide reasonable accommodation which costs more than a nominal cost.

The Equality Authority expects that a percentage of its customers will have disabilities including physical, intellectual and sensory disabilities and mental health issues. The Equality Authority seeks to anticipate the requirements of customers with disabilities and to ensure that customers with disabilities will not be excluded by barriers including physical, systemic, communications and attitudinal barriers.

The Equality Authority seeks to ensure that staff do not use inappropriate or disrespectful language, speak too quickly or unclearly or provide information only in small print. The Equality Authority seeks to ensure that staff do not display patronising attitudes and make assumptions about people's abilities or inabilities.

The Equality Authority seeks to ensure that the physical environment is accessible and will seek to avoid barriers such as narrow doorways, steep staircases, cluttered layout, poor lighting and signage. It seeks to ensure that its services are provided using flexible systems, well briefed staff and straightforward procedures.

The Equality Authority will provide, where appropriate and reasonable, alternative methods of making services available or auxiliary aids or services.

Each person has unique needs and must be considered, assessed and accommodated individually. On occasions it may be appropriate to ask customers to identify whether they have any particular requirements. The Equality Authority seeks to provide an environment where a person with a disability can identify what their needs are and how these might best be met through dialogue with staff. Staff training will support a capacity to make reasonable accommodation. The Customer Service Officer has the responsibility to ensure that customers with disabilities are reasonably accommodated.

### 3. Reasonable accommodation of diversity

The Equality Authority is committed to the reasonable accommodation of diversity in the manner in which our services are provided. We will take steps to address needs specific to customers from all of the other grounds in order to enable them avail of our services, through for example, dialogue with them to identify their needs

and how these might best be met, the provision of interpreters, the appropriate accommodation of those with caring responsibilities, through such as the timing and scheduling of meetings. We will endeavour to ensure a physical environment that is welcoming to all, taking initiatives such as using art and posters on walls to reflect this commitment.

#### **4. Customer relations**

We will deal with customers in a considerate, courteous and open manner and will be straightforward, consistent and professional. We seek to provide a harassment free environment for our customers. We seek to treat all customers fairly and not to discriminate, while respecting individual differences and needs.

#### **5. Customer feedback**

We encourage the participation of representative organisations in feedback systems. We have regular meetings with organisations representing and articulating the interests of those experiencing inequality. We will develop more proactive customer feedback mechanisms including the use of comment cards and questionnaires on our website.

#### **6. Communications strategy**

We endeavour to ensure that people across the nine grounds are aware of our service and we implement a communications strategy that uses channels of communication, formats and media that are accessible to all across the nine grounds.

#### **7. Events**

We aspire to provide excellent facilities at all our events. We use safe, accessible premises and provide audio facilities and interpreters including signers as appropriate.

#### **8. Outcomes**

We strive to realise benefits for all groups across the nine grounds. This is reflected in

the criteria that are used in prioritising our work, using positive action measures targeting specific groups and by investing in accommodating diversity as appropriate.

#### **9. Official language equality**

We will comply with the requirements of the Official Languages Act 2003.

#### **10. Advertising**

We will keep all advertising under review to ensure that it complies with the Equal Status Act, 2000, that it includes a positive reflection of diversity and that it promotes equality.

### **Responsibilities under the Policy**

#### **(a) Senior management team**

The senior management team is responsible for implementing the Equal Status Policy.

#### **(b) Equality Committee**

The Equality Authority has established an Equality Committee to support the senior management team in the implementation of this Equal Status Policy. The terms of reference of the Equality Committee are to:-

- Consider internal equality issues;
- Focus on internal practices and procedures and the values they reflect in accordance with the commitments made in our employment equality and equal status policies;
- Keep these equality policies under review;
- Keep an overall focus on their operation;
- Provide an impetus for their operation;
- Contribute thinking and reflection on their operation; and
- Report regularly to the Chief Executive Officer.

### **(c) Management**

Management and others in positions of authority have a particular responsibility to ensure that discrimination against the Equality Authority's customers does not occur and that equality is promoted. Management should:

- Provide good example by treating customers with courtesy and respect;
- Promote awareness of the equality policies and procedures;
- Be vigilant for signs of discrimination and take action before a complaint escalates;
- Respond sensitively to a customer who makes a complaint of discrimination;
- Explain the procedures to be followed if a complaint of discrimination is made;
- Ensure that a customer making a complaint is not victimised for doing so; and
- Monitor and follow up the situation after a complaint is made so that discrimination does not recur.

### **(d) Trade unions**

Trade unions can play a role in the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of equality in the provision of goods and services provided by the Equality Authority through their information and training services and when representing their members in fora such as collective bargaining. Trade unions may also play a role in providing information, advice and representation to employees against whom allegations of discrimination have been made, and to members who feel they have been discriminated against.

### **(e) Employees**

All staff employed in the Equality Authority can contribute to achieving a discrimination free environment and to promoting equality through cooperating with policies and procedures to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. Discrimination, sexual harassment and harassment or bullying of the Equality Authority's customers by

Equality Authority staff will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action.

### **(f) Customer Service Officer**

The Customer Service Officer has the responsibility to ensure that customers with disabilities and customers across the wider diversity are reasonably accommodated, and for dealing with the customers dis-satisfied with a line manager responsible for a complaint.

### **(g) Organisations from within the nine grounds**

Groups and organisations representing people who belong to the nine grounds can play a role in the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of equality in the provision of the Equality Authority's services through their participation in the development and implementation of policies and procedures and in feedback mechanisms, and through their information, training and advocacy services.

### **(h) Non-employees**

Discrimination against customers or staff by non-employees will not be tolerated and may lead to termination of contracts, or suspension of services, or exclusion from the premises or the imposition of other sanctions (as appropriate).

## **Communication of this Policy**

The Equality Authority is committed to the effective communication of this policy. It will be communicated to:

### **(a) Equality Authority staff**

Current Equality Authority staff will be made aware of the policy at staff meetings and through the ongoing work of management and of the Equality Committee. New Equality Authority staff will be made aware of the policy as part of the formal induction process.

## **(b) Organisations from within the nine grounds**

Groups representing the nine grounds will be aware of the policy through participation in its development and implementation. They will be furnished with copies of the policy and kept up to date in relation to any changes.

## **(c) Customers and business contacts**

A summary of the Policy will be prominently displayed in the reception area, meeting and consultation rooms and on the website. A short statement confirming the policies in existence and the organisation's commitment to it will be displayed in the reception area. Any contract with a service provider for the Equality Authority will provide that discrimination against customers (and staff) will constitute a repudiation of the contract and may be a ground for the Equality Authority to terminate the contract.

## **Staff training**

We provide training to staff on quality customer service, on equality in particular about issues related to the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation, on the prevention of discrimination, bullying, harassment and sexual harassment, and on effective strategies in accommodating diversity and promoting equality.

## **Monitoring**

We have mechanisms in place to collect and track customer data across the nine grounds in our information and legal services. We monitor balances across the nine grounds to ensure an adequate and appropriate inclusion of all grounds in our various areas of work. We review and evaluate initiatives to ensure quality and impact across all nine grounds.

## **Complaints**

We endeavour to provide an excellent service to all our customers. While doing this, we also maintain an accessible, easy-to-use system for dealing with any complaints about the service we provide. We ensure that customers initially have access to the line manager of the area where the complaint has arisen, to seek resolution of the difficulty, if possible. We have also appointed a Customer Service Officer, Mr. Éamon Mulligan, who acts as a contact person for customers dissatisfied with a line manager's response to a complaint. He will also inform the customer of the time limits under the Act.

## **Review**

We are committed to:

- Keeping this policy under review;
- Monitoring outcomes across the grounds; and
- Reporting annually in our Annual Report on its implementation and on any positive action taken.

## **Contact details**

The Equality Authority  
2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2

Public Information Centre  
Lo Call 1890 245 545

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