



Wicklow County Council: Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Implementation Plan

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1. Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Duty) requires public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights, for employees, service users, members and policy beneficiaries, across all their function areas¹. In developing this implementation plan, the guidance issued by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has been followed².

Public bodies must undertake three steps in giving effect to this Duty:

- **Step 1. Assess:** Undertake an assessment of the equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups for the Duty (with particular focus on issues that have relevance to the specific functions of that public body) and to make that assessment publicly available.
- **Step 2. Address:** Identify and communicate the plans, policies and actions being taken or proposed, to address the issues identified in the assessment, in the plans, policies, programmes and services of the public body; and
- **Step 3. Report:** Report annually on developments and achievements in implementing the Duty.

The identified groups for the Duty are:

- groups covered by the nine protected grounds under equality legislation: gender (including gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics); civil status; family status (including lone parents and carers); age; disability (broadly defined to include all impairment groups, mental health and medical conditions); sexual orientation; race (encompassing race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins); religion; and membership of the Traveller community;
- groups covered by the ground of socio-economic status (those who are at risk of or experiencing poverty and social exclusion); and
- rights holders under relevant human rights instruments.

The identified groups further include those people and groups at the intersections of these grounds, forming part of more than one of the groups.

The functions of Wicklow County Council encompass:

- service provision;
- employment;
- policy-making; and

¹ [Section 42](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

² [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2019.

- corporate matters.

2. Equality and Human Rights Values Statement

2.1 Introduction

Wicklow County Council is taking a values-led approach to implementing the Duty. This equality and human rights values statement identifies and defines five interlinked values that motivate our ambitions for equality and human rights under the Duty, the values of:

- dignity;
- diversity;
- participation;
- autonomy; and
- social justice.
-

For each of these values we establish:

- **a statement of outcome** – the implications of the value for the change we seek to contribute to and the priorities we pursue as an organisation, so as to take account of equality and human rights; and
- **a statement of process** – the implications of the value for the way we work in pursuing this change, so as to take account of equality and human rights.

This equality and human rights values statement frames our implementation of the Duty in that:

- The assessment of equality and issues is framed by these values to ensure the full scope of equality and human rights is addressed in our assessment; and
- The statement of outcome and statement of purpose serve as benchmarks in our decision-making to establish and sustain our ambition for equality and human rights when implementing the address step.

2.2. Our Equality and Human Rights Values Statement

<p>Dignity Diversity Participation Autonomy Social Justice</p>

Dignity

Dignity is about creating a level playing field and being open-minded, transparent, and ethical. It involves treating people with fairness, and interacting with respect, and empathy.

Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council strives to ensure that people and communities from across the identified groups perceive Wicklow County Council as an organisation where they are treated with fairness, and experience interactions of respect and empathy.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that ensures people from the identified groups are treated with fairness, and experience respect and empathy in their dealings with the organisation across our different functions; that all forms of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment are eliminated; and that there is a comfort in exploring and discussing issues of diversity.

Diversity

Diversity is about a recognition for and a valuing of difference. It involves adapting for needs specific to the diversity of people, and achieving an inclusion of, and a sense of belonging for, this diversity within an organisation.

Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council strives to ensure an acknowledgement of, recognition for and celebration of diversity across the identified groups, that is underpinned by the provision of adequate resources and reflected in the implementation of best practice for accessibility.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that meets people from the identified grounds where they are at, with systems in place to establish and adapt for their specific needs and to remove any barriers they experience, in the workplace, in the provision of services, and in the design of infrastructure.

Participation

Participation is about listening to and hearing from a diversity of people, and this diversity of people having a say in decision-making. It involves encouraging and empowering this diversity of voices, and being accountable to this diversity of people.

Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council strives to build and work in partnerships with the identified groups and their representative organisations, and to create the conditions necessary for the identified groups and their representative organisations to have an influential voice.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that recognises the voicelessness that can be experienced by people from the identified groups, gives voice to people from the identified groups and their representative organisations across our different

functions, through accessible and creative: processes for consultation; structures and systems for engagement and decision-making; and feedback processes.

Autonomy

Autonomy is about freedoms, independence, and self-determination. It involves enabling choices and providing options for people.

Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council strives to maximise the options that are available to people from the identified groups, enabling them to achieve outcomes through our services, and to progress their careers in our workplace.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that opens up the available choices for people from the identified groups, providing information on options and enabling informed choice making.

Social Justice

Social justice is about resources and the access to and outcomes from resources. It involves meeting needs, addressing disadvantage, and enabling access to new opportunities and outcomes.

Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council seeks to promote and support wellbeing and a quality of life for people from the identified groups, with these people achieving outcomes on a par with the wider population in availing of our services and in our workplace.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that supports and takes positive action, as required, for people from the identified groups to access opportunities and achieve new outcomes through our services, and to access opportunities and achieve new outcomes in our workplace, being mindful in both areas to avoid unintended negative consequences.

3. Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

3.1 Introduction

The first step of the Duty requires a public body to prepare and publish an assessment of the equality and human rights issues, facing the identified groups under the Duty, that are relevant to the functions of the public body. ***As such, this assessment is not an assessment or evaluation of the performance of Wicklow County Council in regard to equality and human rights.***

The assessment of equality and human rights issues involves an examination of the situation, experience, and identity of the identified groups for the Duty, where:

- **Situation** of the group in terms of their access to resources and any particular disadvantage they experience.
- **Experience** of the group in terms of the quality of their interaction with employers and service providers and the wider society.
- **Identity** of the group in terms of how they chose to give expression to their identity and the specific needs that arise from their identity.

This assessment has been compiled from an evidence base of current equality and human rights research and reports from relevant Irish sources. This evidence base is provided in an appendix to this document, identifying the sources used, and providing key relevant data from each of these.

The five values identified by Wicklow County Council that motivate our ambitions for equality and human rights in implementing the Duty: dignity; diversity; participation; autonomy; and social justice, are used as a framework to set out this assessment of the equality and human rights issues.

3.2 Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

Addressing the equality and human rights issues identified below reflects a commitment to respond to the specific oppressions involved in racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, sectarianism, sexism, and ageism.

The equality and human rights issues identified below relate to all of the identified groups unless otherwise indicated. In some instances, specific examples are given for particular groups where there is a unique experience for that group in regard to the issue(s) or where that group experience significant/persistent inequality/discrimination/human rights violations in regard to the issue(s).

Dignity

Dignity is about creating a level playing field and being open-minded, transparent, and ethical. It involves treating people with fairness, and interacting with respect, and empathy. The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Wicklow County Council, are:

- Discrimination, individual and systemic, including:
 - in the workplace, service provision, and accessing accommodation.
 - comparatively higher levels of discrimination experienced by Black and minority ethnic people including Travellers and Roma, people with disabilities, and people from minority religions; by lone parents in service provision; and by older people in the workplace, LGBTI people in the workplace, and women in the workplace.

- pregnancy related discrimination and discrimination against trans people transitioning at work.
- Harassment, sexual harassment and bullying, including:
 - gender based violence, including sexual harassment.
 - comparatively higher levels of harassment of LGBTI people.
 - harassment of LGBTI staff by service users, in the context of far right activities.
 - comparatively higher levels of online and offline bullying of young people.
 - significant levels of online hate speech.
- Bias, stereotyping, stigma, and false assumptions including:
 - comparatively higher levels of stereotyping of older people, young people, people with disabilities, women, and Black and minority ethnic people including Travellers.
 - bias and stigma in responses to and interactions with people with addiction issues.
- Being looked down on and negatively judged.
- Public hostility and incitement of fear about and misunderstanding of diversity.
- Having to hide one's identity at work and in other settings for fear of discrimination and harassment including:
 - for LGBTI people at work.
 - for Travellers at work.
 - for Roma at work and in public, in particular Roma women.
- Fear and isolation including:
 - older people feeling unsafe at home and in public spaces.
 - LGBTI people feeling unsafe in public spaces.
 - limited integration support and opportunity for non-Irish nationals.
 - older people and people with disabilities living alone.
- Unwelcoming and hostile work environments and service-provision environments including:
 - invisibility for diversity within an organisation.
 - lack of trauma informed practice where this would be appropriate.
- Under-reporting of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment due to fear of victimisation or lack of belief that change is possible.

- Lack of adequate procedures and processes to address incidents of discrimination, harassment or sexual harassment and failure to appropriately implement procedures and processes in place.
- Breaches of privacy.

Diversity

Diversity is about a recognition for and a valuing of difference. It involves adapting for needs specific to the diversity of people, and achieving an inclusion of, and a sense of belonging for, this diversity within an organisation.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Wicklow County Council, are:

- Lack of reasonable accommodation for the specific needs of the identified groups in the workplace, and a one-size-fits-all approach, including:
 - lack of gradual retirement options for older people.
 - lack of flexible working arrangements for people with caring responsibilities, and uneven take up of these by women and men.
 - failure to make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in job-design and workplace organisation.
 - failure to adapt for and support cultural difference, including language diversity.
- Lack of reasonable accommodation for the specific needs of the identified groups in service provision, and a one-size-fits-all approach including:
 - inaccessible procedures, processes and forms in service provision.
 - inaccessible communications and communication processes.
 - limited range of access routes made available to services and to information on services, across in-person, by phone, and online systems.
 - lack of lifelong housing focus in housing design for older people.
 - failure to adapt for and support cultural diversity.
 - lack of culturally appropriate accommodation provision for Travellers, including transient sites to facilitate nomadism, and lack of maintenance where this is provided.
 - lack of translation and interpretation provision for language diversity, including Irish Sign Language and plain English.
 - failure to address literacy barriers.
 - lack of flexibility in service provision to respond to the needs of those with caring responsibilities.
 - failure to make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in the design of services and their delivery.
- Lack of support for the specific needs arising from diversity including:

- lack of supports for Black and minority ethnic groups including Travellers and Roma to maintain and explore their culture, identity and heritage.
 - high cost and limited availability of childcare services and care services for older people.
- Lack of universal design in relation to buildings, public transport, outdoor facilities, and IT systems rendering these inaccessible for people with disabilities.
 - Lack of understanding of diversity, and lack of training on effective response to diversity and on reasonable accommodation of specific needs, and lack of policy and procedures for making such reasonable accommodation in an organisation.
 - Lack of response to intersectional groups, in particular in plans and service provision targeted on specific groups, and lack of understanding of intersectionality.
 - Lack of equality data being gathered and analysed.

Participation

Participation is about hearing the voice of the diversity of people, and this diversity of people having a say in decision-making. It involves encouraging and empowering this diversity of voices, and being accountable to this diversity.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Wicklow County Council, are:

- Limited participation in decision-making processes and structures, and lack of influence in decision-making processes and structures.
- Not being listened to or heard, and lack of feedback and of ongoing two-way communication after engagement in consultation processes.
- Lack of access to consultation and decision-making processes for failure to accommodate the specific needs of groups, including:
 - childcare responsibilities.
 - timing of meetings.
 - lack of innovation and creativity to meet specific needs and enable effective participation.
 - hostile environments for consultation or decision-making processes, that undermine dignity.
 - location and transport barriers.
- Lack of procedures for accountability in relation to decisions made through participative processes.

- Lack of support for and meaningful engagement with organisations representative of those experiencing equality and human rights issues.
- Lack of presence in political representation and lack of participation in electoral politics including:
 - barriers to women’s participation of childcare, cash, confidence, culture and candidate selection, and of timing of meetings.
 - barriers in the electoral process for people with disabilities.
- Lack of information and support to engage in consultation and participation processes, including:
 - lack of understanding of the relevance of the policy process that is a focus for consultation and participation.
 - failure to clarify the level of power and influence that is held by those invited to participate.

Autonomy

Autonomy is about freedoms, independence, and self-determination. It involves enabling choices and providing options for people.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Wicklow County Council, are:

- Lack of options provided and choices available.
- Lack of access to information on options and to support informed choices.
- Lack of financial independence including:
 - victims of gender-based violence.
 - young people dependent on their parents.
- Lack of legal status including:
 - refugees and asylum seekers.
 - manner of application of Habitual Residence Condition requirements for Roma.
 - manner of application of Housing Circular 41/2012.
- Lack of control over one’s life including:
 - people with disabilities living in congregated settings.
 - victims of domestic violence subjected to coercive control.

- lack of access to information for people with disabilities on options for assisted decision-making.
- people in direct provision accommodation centres.
- older people living in institutional settings.
- limited funding for and access to home help services for older people to live independently.

Social Justice

Social justice is about resources and the access to and outcomes from resources. It involves meeting needs, addressing disadvantage, and enabling access to new opportunities and outcomes.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value and relevant to the functions of Wicklow County Council, are:

- Housing disadvantage and lack of access to housing including:
 - lack of availability of social housing to meet high level of need.
 - housing deprivation and overcrowding for people with disabilities, lone parents, migrants, young people, Roma, children, and people within the socio-economic status ground.
 - for Travellers living on the roadside, in sub-standard accommodation and in over-crowded accommodation.
- Homelessness including:
 - comparatively higher numbers of lone parents, Travellers, children, single people, people with disabilities, and victims of domestic violence without access to refuge provision.
- Unemployment, underemployment and precarious work including:
 - low levels of labour market participation by people with disabilities, lone parents, and Travellers and Roma.
 - insecure working conditions for and exploitation experienced by Roma.
 - barriers to accessing decent work, including work with adequate income and with security of contract, for women, lone parents, young people, migrants, ethnic minorities, including Travellers, and people with disabilities.
 - comparatively higher levels of youth unemployment (not in employment, education or training).
- Lack of progression within the workplace including:
 - concentration of women in middle-management in the civil service.
 - barriers to career progression for people with disabilities.

- Poverty and low income including:
 - area-based deprivation.
 - numbers of young people living in consistent poverty.
 - comparatively higher levels of poverty among Roma and Travellers, lone parents, people with disabilities, and unemployed people.
 - lack of response to the additional costs of having a disability.
 - concentration of women and of people with disabilities in low paid employment.
 - poverty experienced by victims of domestic violence and by people with serious or long-term illness.
 - pay and pension gaps experienced by women.

- Lack of access to transport, including:
 - limited transport infrastructure and connectivity for older people and people living in rural areas.
 - transport provision that is inaccessible for people with disabilities.

- Digital inequality and lack of access to infrastructure, skills, and equipment including:
 - on-line only provision of services and information.
 - for older people, limiting access to information and to online services.

- Barriers to participation in the arts as producers and consumers including:
 - impediments for women to advance careers in the arts.
 - barriers experienced on the basis of socio-economic background, ethnicity or religion, sexual orientation or gender identity, family status, age, or membership of the Traveller Community.
 - lack of reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities.
 - limited access to arts funding for disadvantaged groups.

4. Implementation

4.1 Enabling Implementation

Leadership

The elected members provide leadership for implementation of the Duty. In doing so, they:

- Engage in familiarisation on the Duty and this implementation plan;
- Require implementation of the Duty before adoption of policies; and
- Receive and consider the annual reports on implementation of the Duty and its impact.

Senior management provide leadership for implementation of the Duty. In doing so, they:

- Engage in familiarisation on the Duty and this implementation plan;
- Include the Duty as a regular agenda item, receiving and considering regular reports on the implementation of the Duty; and
- Make available the necessary human and financial resources for an effective implementation of the Duty.
- Articulate and engage the equality and human rights values in their decision-making, management practice, and communications.

Wicklow County Council structures, in particular the SPCs include an appropriate focus on the Duty in their standing orders, in order to:

- Support and engage with the implementation of the Address step in relation to any policy, plan, programme, service or strategy they are considering;
- Include the Duty and its implementation as a regular agenda item; and
- Receive and consider annual reports on implementation of the Duty and its impact in their field of responsibility.

The Wicklow County Council Corporate Department holds responsibility for this implementation plan and for ensuring and enabling its implementation.

A cross-organisational Duty Working Group, drawing in the different parts of the organisation, is convened to drive implementation of the Duty in Wicklow County Council.

The Duty Working Group:

- Prepares an annual plan for implementing the Duty, identifying the enabling actions to be taken, and the plans, policies, programmes and services to be a focus for implementing the Address step;
- Track and support implementation of the annual plan for implementing the Duty; and
- Compile the annual report on progress in implementing the Duty and achievements in addressing the equality and human rights issues, and organises staff reflection on this report and undertakes any reviews found necessary to strengthen implementation of the Duty.

Skills and Awareness

Familiarisation events and training are provided to engage all staff with: the Duty and its requirements; Wicklow County Council's ambition for the Duty, the values that underpin this, and this implementation; and with the implications of this commitment for their role. Induction training includes a focus on the Duty and its requirements and on this implementation plan and the values that underpin it.

Training is provided to staff responsible for implementing the Address step of the Duty in the review and development of policies, plans, programmes and strategies, to build capacity and skills to effectively fulfil this responsibility.

Consultation

Wicklow County Council takes a participative approach in implementing the Duty. This formed part of our implementation of the Assess step of the Duty and will form part of our implementation of the Address step, as appropriate for the nature and scale of the plan, policy, programme or strategy.

This participative approach involves civil society organisations representative of the identified groups for the Duty and Wicklow County Council will continue to develop its contact list of personnel and organisations for this participative approach.

Communication

Internal staff communications engage our equality and human rights values, focus on our equality and human rights ambitions, and address the Duty, its requirements and achievements under our implementation plan. In our value, in particular through the website, staff email, and intranet.

Our equality and human rights values are made visible in our workspaces and places of service provision, and we enable feedback on our alignment with these values.

We promote discussion of our equality and human rights values and our alignment with these values in our various internal management and section meetings.

We engage and draw attention to our equality and human rights values in our external communications.

4.2 Address Step

Public bodies, under the Address step of the Duty, are required to address the issues that have been identified in their assessment of equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups, in their plans, policies and actions.

The Address Step involves an identification of priority initiatives for implementation of the Duty. These would encompass plans, policies or actions that might be identified as being

required to immediately respond to equality and human rights issues as assessed, that are prioritised by the organisation.

The Address step of the Duty is also an ongoing obligation on the organisation and, in this, it is implemented as an integral part of the development and review of plans, policies, programmes and strategies – identified as key moments for implementing the Duty.

At the commencement of the development/review process:

- Review the assessment of equality and human rights issues to establish those issues that are relevant to the particular plan, policy, or programme.
- Gather the data and information available in relation to the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant.
- Review the equality and human rights values statement to extract the statements of outcome or statements of process that are relevant.

In implementing the development/review process:

- Include a focus on the relevant equality and human rights issues in any evaluation or contextual review undertaken as part of the development/review process.
- Transmit the obligations under the Duty to any external consultants contracted and ensure they are fully briefed in this regard.
- Track the relevant equality and human rights issues to ensure they are addressed and the values benchmarks to ensure they are respected during the development/review process.

At final draft stage of the development/review process:

- Convene a meeting of relevant staff to check that the draft adequately and appropriately addresses each of the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant, and that it is aligned with the relevant statements of priority and process in the equality and human rights values statement.
- Conduct a participative exercise, for initiatives of scale, with the working group for the Duty and, possibly, with representatives of the identified groups to check that the equality and human rights issues are adequately and appropriately identified and addressed.

After the development/review process:

- Establish and/or use existing monitoring systems to track progress on the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant.

- Report annually on progress made in implementing the Duty and the achievements in addressing the equality and human rights issues – the Report step of the Duty.
- Use this annual report to reflect on this progress to strengthen the procedures for implementing the Duty as found to be necessary, and on the achievements to strengthen the plan, policy, programme or strategy, as found to be necessary.

4.3 Priority Initiatives

A number of actions are to be taken with priority to address issues that emerge from the assessment of equality and human rights issues.

- The review and further development of a new staff charter, customer charter, and customer service action plan will include implementation of the Address step of the Duty.
- The preparation of the next Team Plan for the Libraries, and of the next Team Plan for Community, Culture and Social Development will include implementation of the Address to provide a lead for and set down a model for all Team Plans in the following year.
- The preparation for the next Wicklow County Council Corporate Plan will give consideration as to how the Duty is to be addressed and to be implemented in this process over the coming year.
- The enabling steps necessary to achieve the above, including:
 - communication of the implementation plan, once approved, to all parts of the organisation;
 - reconvening the working group for the Duty, expanding this as found to be needed; and
 - provision of training to those responsible for the Address step in the above actions.

4.4 Ongoing Implementation

The Wicklow County Council Corporate Plan is identified as foundational for the ongoing implementation of the Duty. It will include a link to: the assessment of equality and human rights issues; and the implementation plan for the Duty for the period of the Corporate Plan. It will include provisions to drive ongoing action to address the equality and human rights issues as assessed.

The annual service delivery plans that flow from the Corporate Plan, with their high-level goals, will include steps to progress the ongoing implementation of the Duty, tagging actions under the high level goals for implementation of the Address step of the Duty, and including actions to address equality and human rights issues that are being prioritised.

The Team Plans that form part of this organisational planning process, will involve implementation of the Address step in order to include actions to address the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant and of priority for the area covered by the plan. Each year, key moments for implementing the Address Step are identified in our annual plan for the Duty, in terms of development and review processes in regard to policies, plans, services and programmes. These key moments include, but are not limited to the development and review of:

- County Development Plan.
- Human Resources plans and policies.
- Corporate management systems, including such as PMDS.
- Service design, development and delivery plans and policies.
- Local authority plans and strategies, such as the library plan, the leisure and sports plan, the age friendly strategy, the arts strategy, and the climate action plan.
- Local authority multi-agency plans and strategies, such as the LECP.
- Procurement systems, with a view to passing on the Duty to contractors, in a manner that reflects their scale and functions.
- Grant aid systems, with a view to passing on the Duty to beneficiaries, in a manner that reflects their scale and functions.

4.5 Report

The Wicklow County Council Annual Report will include a report on the progress and achievements in implementing the Duty, based on a report prepared by the working group. The working group will organise or support a reflection process on this report with a view to: celebrating success; and strengthening process for implementing the Duty, and plans, policies, and actions to address the equality and human rights issues as assessed, as found to be necessary.

Appendix 1 Implementation Template

Purpose of plan, policy, project or strategy

Dignity

Dignity is about creating a level playing field and being open-minded, transparent, and ethical. It involves treating people with fairness, and interacting with respect, and empathy.

Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council strives to ensure that people and communities from across the identified groups perceive Wicklow County Council as an organisation where they are treated with fairness, and experience interactions of respect and empathy.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that ensures people from the identified groups are treated with fairness, and experience respect and empathy in their dealings with the organisation across our different functions; that all forms of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment are eliminated; and that there is a comfort in exploring and discussing issues of diversity.

Relevant equality & human rights issues	Addressed in current draft of plan, policy, project or strategy?	Relevant section(s) of plan, policy, project or strategy	Comments / how you might address

Diversity

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Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council strives to ensure an acknowledgement of, recognition for and celebration of diversity across the identified groups, that is underpinned by the provision of adequate resources and reflected in the implementation of best practice for accessibility.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that meets people from the identified grounds where they are at, with systems in place to establish and adapt for their specific needs and to remove any barriers they experience, in the workplace, in the provision of services, and in the design of infrastructure.

Relevant equality and human rights issues	Addressed in current draft of plan, policy, project or strategy?	Relevant section(s) of plan, policy, project or strategy	Comments / how you might address

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Statement of Process: We work in a manner that recognises the voicelessness that can be experienced by people from the identified groups, gives voice to people from the identified groups and their representative organisations across our different functions, through accessible and creative: processes for consultation; structures and systems for engagement and decision-making; and feedback processes.

Relevant equality and human rights issues	Addressed in current draft of plan, policy, project or strategy?	Relevant section(s) of plan, policy, project or strategy	Comments / how you might address

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Statement of Process: We work in a manner that opens up the available choices for people from the identified groups, providing information on options and enabling informed choice making.

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Social Justice

Social justice is about resources and the access to and outcomes from resources. It involves meeting needs, addressing disadvantage, and enabling access to new opportunities and outcomes.

Statement of Outcome: Wicklow County Council seeks to promote and support wellbeing and a quality of life for people from the identified groups, with these people achieving outcomes on a par with the wider population in availing of our services and in our workplace.

Statement of Process: We work in a manner that supports and takes positive action, as required, for people from the identified groups to access opportunities and achieve new outcomes through our services, and to access opportunities and achieve new outcomes in our workplace, being mindful in both areas to avoid unintended negative consequences.

Relevant equality and human rights issues	Addressed in current draft of plan, policy, project or strategy?	Relevant section(s) of plan, policy, project or strategy	Comments / how you might address

Appendix 2 Evidence Book

This assessment of equality and human rights is evidence-based in drawing from:

- A. Local Policy Strategies
- B. National Policy Strategies
- C. National Research
- D. International Submissions

A: Local Policy Strategies

The [Wicklow Age Friendly Strategy 2017-2022](#) identifies issues of situation, experience and identity in relation to the age ground.

In relation to **situation**:

- 36% had difficulty accessing cinema or other form of entertainment, 31% had difficulty accessing the Garda station, 28% had difficulty accessing public transport, 24% had difficulty accessing local health service, 23% had difficulty accessing banking services, 23% had difficulty accessing a community centre or other venue, 21% had difficulty accessing a park or green area, 21% had difficulty accessing supermarkets or shops.
- Transport, lack of and access to, was the main issue for many older people. A large percentage of those participating in the consultations had their own means of transport, however there is a significant percentage of older people in the county that do not have independent means of transport.

- Home help is an essential service which allows older people to remain independent in their own home. However, there is a feeling that it is underfunded and the home help providers should be able to provide more hours. It was felt that the home help had moved from the original model of assisting a person to live with dignity in their own home to a more medical model where the home helpers are restricted in the work they can do.
- Older people commented that many employers will not take anyone on over the age of 60, despite the experience they might have. Older people should have the choice to stay in work past retirement age if they want and at least until the age that the pension payment is activated.
- The poor level of communications was a major concern at all the consultations and it was noted that it was increasingly difficult to get accurate information on entitlements and services. The lack of accessible published information is causing major hardship with older people pointing out that everything is now on the internet but a significant number of older people do not have access to the internet or know how to find the information they need on it.

In relation to **experience**:

- Participants felt that they were less safe in their own homes than they were five or ten years ago. The reporting of crime in the media has contributed to some older people feeling like prisoners in their own home especially in winter months. This leads to increased isolation and social exclusion. Many older people especially in the smaller urban areas and rural areas stated that due to the lack of proper lighting they were afraid to walk on the footpaths or roads.
- Some people noted that when you retire you can feel isolated as points of social contact are cut off.
- The media was seen as portraying a very negative image of older people both nationally and locally, describing older people as “coffin dodgers” or bed blockers.
- Invisibility, some older people expressed the feeling that as you became older one became invisible.
- 6.1% of Wicklow participants reported that they had experienced negative attitudes or behaviour due to their age. The most common sources of negative attitudes and behaviour in Wicklow were younger people (4.6%), followed by the people in your community (2.6%).

In relation to **identity**:

- The importance of lifelong housing in the design of houses came across as very important so that houses can be adapted to meet a person’s requirements as they go through the different life stages.

- We also recognise that the added difficulties faced by older people experiencing multiple disadvantage ie: someone who is over 65 but also belongs to one or more of another socially excluded group e.g. disability (physical and/or mental), ethnic minority/gay/ living in poverty/homeless. Their needs and issues are particularly challenging and require a multi-dimensional, multi-agency approach.

The [Wicklow County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024](#) identifies issues of situation and identity in relation to Travellers.

In relation to **situation**:

- Current need reflecting the accommodation preference of the Travellers concerned was found to be c. 80 units of accommodation.
- A decrease in numbers of families in Private Rented accommodation was noted with the according increase in numbers of Roadside families and those in shared and emergency accommodation.
- Concern was expressed about the significant health issues experienced within the Travelling Community, and the substandard accommodation in which some of them reside.
- There are a number of unauthorised Traveller encampments throughout the county.

In relation to **identity**:

- The suite of accommodation options that can be provided by Wicklow County Council includes: Traveller Specific Accommodation. It was proposed that the provision of a transient site for Travellers be a commitment in this TAP.

The [Wicklow County LECP 2016-2022](#) identifies issues of situation and experience across the identified grounds.

In relation to **situation**:

- There are significant differences in affluence and deprivation within settlement areas, and the County Wicklow Socio-Economic Profile highlights the difference between the north of the County and the southern areas of the County in terms of deprivation levels.
- The total age dependency rate in 2011 is 51%, an increase of 5.2 % between 2006 and 2011; Wicklow's dependency rate is marginally above the national average rate.
- The need to increase social inclusion, provide access to services including health and education, and build closer community relations within the County is highlighted in the document in relation to non-Irish nationals.

- The present County Wicklow employment-to-population ratio is 42%; this reflects the poor economic conditions of recent years.
- The labour force participation rate for people with a disability in Wicklow was 30% compared to 62% for the overall population.
- While the County has experienced a decline of almost 19% in persons under the age of 25 on the live register (reduction of c.280 persons October 2015 compared to October 2014), youth unemployment remains a key area of concern.
- Housing disadvantage is an issue for people living in County Wicklow. There is a high rate of people in receipt of rent supplement and the length of claims is growing. Over 70% of these are considered long-term. This points to a high level of need for social housing in the County.
- The population living in rural areas are impacted by poor transport infrastructure and connectivity.
- In County Wicklow 5,131 people provide regular unpaid personal help to a friend or family member. Over 20% of the carers in the County provide care for more than six hours per day.
- The Irish Traveller population represents 0.5% of the County's population, with 721 Irish Traveller persons resident in County Wicklow, a large proportion of who are under the age of 18 years.
- 13% of County Wicklow residents have a disability, with some people having more than one disability.
- 35% of the population of the County are under the age of 25 years, while 11% are aged over 65 years.
- Almost 10% of the County's population are non-Irish nationals.
- Lone parent households accounted for approximately 12% of all private households in County Wicklow compared to a national rate of 11%.
- 27% of the population are living in rural areas.

In relation to **experience**:

- Integration of minority groups including non-Irish nationals into our communities is an important focus.
- Residents of Wicklow are impacted by closure of Garda stations and can feel unsafe in their communities.

B: National Policy Strategies

The [National Youth Strategy 2015-2020](#) identifies issues of situation in relation to the socio-economic status ground.

In relation to **situation**:

- In 2014, it was reported that about 74,000 15-24 year-olds in Ireland (16.7%) were not in education, employment or training compared with the OECD average of 12.6%. In 2014, 23.9% of young people aged 15-24 years were unemployed.
- In 2013, 14% of young people aged 15-24 years were living in consistent poverty.
- Only 12% of post-primary school children engage in recommended levels of physical activity; 6% of 13-year-olds are obese, and a further 20% are overweight.
- In 2013 the suicide rate for young people in Ireland aged 15-19 years was the fourth highest in the EU. The majority of young people who die by suicide have not had any contact with a mental health professional.

In relation to **experience**:

- Almost one-quarter of 9-16 year-olds (23%) surveyed in Ireland in 2012 experienced some form of bullying, online or offline.
- Young people, especially young girls, are particularly vulnerable to negative self-image and media pressure surrounding body image.

In relation to **identity**:

- Research indicates a high level of homophobic bullying in schools and other settings, and this, together with family rejection, has been identified as leading to poor mental health outcomes in later life for young LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) people.

The [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy](#) identifies issues of situation, experience and identity in relation to the Traveller community.

In relation to **situation**:

- A press release by the Fundamental Rights Agency (on 29 November 2016) noted that 80% of Roma interviewed are at risk of poverty compared with an EU average of 17%.

- Travellers stand out as a group that experiences extreme disadvantage in terms of employment, housing and health and that faces exceptionally strong level of prejudice.
- Travellers are much less likely than the general population to own their own home (20% v 70%) while four times as many Traveller families live in only one room. In 2013: 361 Traveller families lived on “unauthorised sites”; 188 Traveller families lived on “basic service bays”; 182 Traveller families shared permanent halting sites; 17 Traveller families shared basic service bays/transient halting sites; and 663 Traveller families shared houses.
- 13% of Traveller children complete second-level education compared to 92% in the settled community. Of those Travellers who drop out of second level education, 55% have left by the age of 15.
- The All Ireland Health Study of 2010, found that 84% of Travellers during the study were currently unemployed. Census 2011 reveals that out of a total labour force of 4,144 Traveller women, 81.2% were without work.

In relation to **experience**:

- Over 40% of Travellers stated that they were not always treated with dignity and respect.
- The All Ireland Traveller Health Study pointed to a reluctance to continue in mainstream education as Travellers feel that it is not associated with any positive outcomes because of the high level of discrimination faced by Travellers when seeking employment.

In relation to **identity**:

- Travellers have reported that Traveller-specific accommodation is not being used by Travellers for the following reasons: tension, conflict and intimidation within and between Traveller families, the location and design of sites and schemes, health, overcrowding and poor maintenance / management of sites.
- Many young Travellers feel that the only way to get on and get jobs was to integrate, become like the settled population and deny one’s identity.
- Travellers and Roma need support to develop, preserve and promote their cultural heritage.
- Intergenerational learning, cultural continuity and positive self- identity for Travellers and Roma should be facilitated.

The [Arts Council Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Strategy](#) identifies issues of situation in relation to the range of identified groups.

In relation to **situation**:

- The Arts Council are deeply aware that, within the arts in Ireland, many inequities still exist and that there is a substantial number of people who continue to experience barriers to engaging with and participating in the arts because of their socio-economic background, ethnicity or religion, sexual orientation or gender identity, family status, age, membership of the Traveller Community, or through lack of accommodation of a disability.
- As evidenced by movements such as Waking the Feminists, Sounding the Feminists and Fair Plé, women artists across a range of artistic disciplines continue to encounter serious impediments to advancing their careers and repertoire in the same way as their male peers.
- There is a need to ensure recipients and beneficiaries of awards and funding programmes better reflect the population profile of contemporary Ireland, inclusive of the most disadvantaged groups.
- There is a need to ensure that boards, staff, advisers and panellists, best reflect and represent the diversity of contemporary Ireland.

The [National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021](#) identifies issues of situation, experience and identity in relation to LGBTI people.

In relation to **situation**:

- LGBTI adults have reported that significant barriers still persist for LGBTI+ employees and that many experience workplace discrimination.

In relation to **experience**:

- In recent data on Equality and Discrimination published by the Central Statistics Office, the highest rates of discrimination were reported by people who identify as LGBTI+ (33.2%).
- LGBTI people continue to experience unacceptable levels of harassment, discrimination in some workplaces.
- The need for increased and non- stereotypical representation of LGBTI+ identities arose as a consistent theme throughout the consultation process.
- LGBTI people can feel unsafe when out and about in the public space including while using public transport.

In relation to **identity**:

- Being able to work in an environment where a person can be fully open about their sexuality and gender identity and bringing their authentic self without fear of

discrimination was rated the most important issue by respondents in the first 'Burning Issues' survey of LGBT people carried out by the National LGBT Federation in 2009.

- LGBTI identities are diverse and Intersectional with different individuals having unique experiences depending on factors such as race, socioeconomic status, disability and background. Intersectional needs have to be addressed if the rights of LGBTI+ people who are Travellers or Roma, have disabilities, are prisoners, migrants or are young or older people are to be adequately identified and protected.

The [National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022](#) identifies or points to issues of situation, experience, and identity for disabled people.

With regard to **situation**:

- 31% of people with a disability are in paid employment compared with 71% of people without a disability being in employment.
- 42% of people with disabilities live in a jobless household putting them at high risk of poverty.
- People with disabilities have poorer educational participation and outcomes. 50% of people with a disability had not completed second level education compared to 22% of people without a disability.

With regard to **experience**:

- People with disabilities are more likely to live alone.
- People with disabilities living in congregated settings.
- Lack of information and awareness among people with disabilities about their options for supported decision making.
- Lack of training for staff working in sectors that interact with people with a disability.

With regard to **identity**,

- Access issues for people with disabilities in relation to public buildings, public transport, IT systems used in service provision, and outdoor facilities, absence of universal design of built environment.
- Lack of provision for Irish Sign Language users when accessing public services with free interpretation needed when accessing/availing of services.

C: National Research

The report on [Discrimination and Inequality in Housing, IHREC & ESRI, 2018](#) identifies issues of situation in relation to the socio-economic status ground.

In relation to **situation**:

- Socio-economic status, proxied by household income, is also strongly associated with housing deprivation, environmental deprivation and over-crowding.
- People with disability have high risk of housing and environmental deprivation. Individuals with a disability are 1.4 times more likely to be living in over-crowded households.
- Lone parents experience higher levels of discrimination in access to housing, housing deprivation and environmental deprivation.
- Migrants from outside the EU are more likely to live in over-crowded accommodation compared to Irish nationals.
- 60 per cent of homeless family units (defined as either a couple with or without children or a single parent with children) are lone mother families.
- Members of the Traveller Community are the most at risk of being homeless – while they represent less than 1 per cent of the Irish population they make up 9 per cent of the homeless population.
- People with disability are particularly over-represented among the homeless population: more than one-in-four homeless people have a disability.
- The youngest individuals (under 30 years) are particularly disadvantaged. This group experiences higher levels of housing and environmental deprivation and over-crowding, and have a higher risk of being homeless.

In relation to **experience**:

- 7.4% of people with disabilities who were looking for accommodation felt discriminated against, compared to 3.5% of people without a disability.
- 17.1% of people who identify as Black, 5.8% of people who identify as Asian, 3.7% of people who identify as White non-Irish, and 3.5% of people who identify as White Irish, and who were looking for accommodation felt discriminated against.
- Travellers are almost ten times as likely to report discrimination in access to housing as the White Irish population.

- People with lower socio-economic backgrounds, i.e. low-educated and unemployed individuals, are more likely to experience discrimination in access to housing.
- The youngest individuals (under 30 years) experience higher levels of discrimination.
- Lone parents experience higher levels of discrimination in access to housing.

The 2017 research report [Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland, IHREC & ESRI, 2017](#) identifies issues of situation and experience across a range of grounds.

In relation to **situation**:

- Discrimination in recruitment may mean certain groups are systematically assigned lower quality jobs or remain unemployed.
- Discrimination in the workplace may lead to lower pay and promotions, lower job satisfaction and a higher risk of redundancy.

In relation to **experience**:

- Women report higher discrimination in the workplace - 6.7% of women, compared to 4.1% of men.
- Older workers (45–64 years) perceive more discrimination than younger workers in seeking work – 12% of those aged 45-64 years said they experienced discrimination in job searching compared to 5.2% of those aged 18–24 and 5.9% of those aged 25–44.
- Compared to White Irish respondents, Black respondents report higher discrimination in the workplace, in public services and in private services. Asian respondents report more discrimination than White Irish in private services.
- Irish Travellers report very high rates of discrimination in seeking work, where they are ten times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination, and extremely high rates of discrimination in private services, where they were over 22 times more likely to report discrimination, particularly in shops, pubs and restaurants.
- Compared to Catholics, members of minority religions report somewhat higher discrimination rates in the workplace and in public and private services.
- Never-married lone parents are more likely to experience discrimination in public and private services than single childless adults.
- Those with a disability experience higher rates of discrimination than those without a disability in all areas – in the workplace, while seeking work, in private services and public services. Those with a disability are more than twice as likely to report

discrimination in recruitment as those without a disability. Just over 7% of respondents with a disability reported experiencing discrimination when using public services, compared to 2.8% of those with no disability.

The [Report of the Joint Committee on Social Protection on the Position of Lone Parents](#) identifies issues of situation, experience and identity in relation to lone parents.

In relation to **situation**:

- 40.8% of Irish lone parents have not completed second level education. By comparison, 65% of the general population have completed second level education (Census 2011).
- Lone parent families consistently face greater levels of deprivation, risk of poverty and consistent poverty. One parent families have the highest consistent poverty of 26.2% rate of any group in Irish society. Lone parents suffer higher rates of deprivation at 57.9% compared to 25.5% in the general population. Children in one-parent families are three times as likely (26.2%) to live in 'consistent poverty' than families with two adults with one to three children (7.7%). (SILC 2015).
- Only 42.5 per cent of lone parents were in employment, compared with 69.3 per cent for heads of two-parent families. Of lone parents, 14.4 per cent were unemployed compared with 11.8 per cent of couples. (Census 2011, CSO).
- Homelessness disproportionately affects single parent families. Figures for homelessness show that 65% of homeless families are lone-parent families while lone-parent families make up 26% of all families.
- Childcare costs in Ireland are among the highest in the OECD (reference). Lone parents, as the sole carers of their children, are more strongly affected by these costs.

In relation to **experience**:

- Domestic violence is also a cause of homelessness in lone parent families. In a recent study carried out by Focus Ireland, 11 of 70 respondents (all lone parents) cited domestic violence as the main cause of their current homelessness. A further five reported that domestic violence had been a factor in reducing their housing stability in the past.

In relation to **identity**:

- Lone parents devote more of their time to caring responsibilities, responsibilities which impinge on their availability for work.
- 86.4% of lone parents were female and 13.6% were male (Approximately one in seven are male).

The report [Roma in Ireland, Access to Fair and Decent Work, Pavee Point, 2023](#) identifies issues of situation in relation Roma.

In relation to **situation**:

- 20% of Roma surveyed were completely marginalised from services and supports. This included living in extreme poverty, in sub-standard accommodation, sometimes with no bathroom, kitchen or cooker. Respondents reported children living in these situations of extreme poverty and deprivation, with children being sent to school hungry and with no lunch. A further 60% of respondents reported experiences of consistent poverty, including not always having enough fuel, food or heat.
- 83.3% of Roma are unemployed and 17.6% of Roma households report begging as a source of income in order to survive.
- All of the Roma who were interviewed in this study were working, had been working or were actively seeking work. However, the types of work that were available to Roma and that Roma could access often had poor conditions. Both Roma and support workers described the difficult conditions that many Roma worked in. Many participants and support workers described Roma having insecure working conditions. Roma and those working to support Roma describe situations of exploitation with Roma workers not being paid.
- 46% of Roma report being homeless at some stage in their lives. Other issues relating to safe and affordable accommodation are severe overcrowding; poor living conditions, a lack of security of tenure; homelessness; and a lack of access to public services including social housing and housing assistance payment. Roma are living in severely overcrowded and unsafe conditions. The Roma Needs Assessment report highlighted that 12.4% of respondents do not have a kitchen. 9.6% do not have a cooker and 13.5% do not have a fridge.
- Roma can face difficulties establishing their local connection.. It is often the person's place of employment that determines this, which can negatively impact Roma, as their place of work can change more regularly due being in precarious employment (National Roma Network, 2022, 5). Also for Roma families living in temporary homeless accommodation, they can be moved regularly and this can make it difficult to maintain employment.
- In Ireland, the Housing Circular 41/2012 was introduced in December 2012 for the stated purpose of providing "advice [to local authorities] considering whether to accept an application for social housing support from a non-Irish national". According to FLAC, two serious issues with the Circular have repeatedly arisen in FLAC's casework. First, there is no clear legal basis for the circular but it is rigidly applied by local authorities. Second, the Circular is contrary to EU law in a number of respects.

- 19.8% of respondents reported that they do not have a PPS number which is vital for accessing a wide range of services, including applying for a medical card and social protection. This indicates a high level of marginalisation from services. Also, significant delays in getting a PPS numbers resulting in workers being on emergency tax for long periods with significant impact on people's lives and well-being.
- Roma face difficulties meeting Habitual Residence Condition requirements due to endemic discrimination in education and in the workplace, making it difficult for Roma to demonstrate a strong pattern of employment in the formal workforce. With low literacy levels and language barriers for Roma, applicants may have difficulty producing the documentation needed to prove habitual residency and may face difficulties responding to the Department. They also may not have proof of address if they are living with extended family. There is little support for applicants in making their applications, in particular the availability of suitable translators and interpreters; inconsistency in decision-making is also a concern. The impact of this means that many Roma are often not entitled to employment and training supports, or to social protection including child benefit and housing supports.

In relation to **experience**:

- Racism and discrimination is a feature of the daily lives of all Roma in Ireland and across Europe. Participants described the racism they experienced throughout their lives and across all dimensions of their lives.
- Research indicates that 78.9% of Roma feel discriminated against in attempting to access employment. Where Roma were employed, there were many reports of discrimination in the workplace.
- 84% of Roma feel discriminated against in attempting to access social protection (despite the fact that the vast majority of Roma have a right to work in Ireland) and almost two-thirds of Roma who were successful in obtaining a social welfare payment felt they were discriminated against in accessing payments.
- The majority of Roma live in Private Rented Accommodation, and 93% report facing discrimination when trying to rent a home.
- A lack of access to social protection was also identified as a barrier to accessing supports for women experiencing domestic violence.

In relation to **identity**:

- Roma with fluent English were less likely to report experiencing discrimination in accessing social protection than Roma with limited English.
- Proficiency in English is also a challenge with 71% of respondents reported having difficulty in reading English. This, coupled with low levels of educational attainment,

mean that employment supports for Roma need to consider literacy issues as well as language barriers for this community.

- Many Roma do not identify publicly as Roma. Women in particular often change their dress style so that they can conceal their identity. They often wore trousers or changed the style of skirt they wore when they were working or trying to access employment. Where Roma were easily identifiable as Roma, for example by dress or physical appearance, they reported experiencing significant racism and found it difficult to access or remain in employment. It has been found that Roma women experience more direct racism and discrimination than men.
- There remains a significant gap in the availability of reliable and comprehensive data in relation to the socio-economic, political and legal situation of Roma in Ireland which results in serious gaps in knowledge about the situation and needs of Roma.
- There is a failure by statutory stakeholders to provide culturally competent services and to address the levels of social exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage that hinder access to education, training and employment networks and opportunities.

The 2018 report [Disability and Discrimination in Ireland, IHREC & ESRI, 2018](#) identifies issues of situation, experience and identity in relation to the disability ground.

In relation to **situation**:

- Participation in the labour market for people with disabilities remains lower than participation rates for the general population: for those aged 15 and over, 22 per cent of people with a disability were at work compared with more than half, (53 per cent) of the overall population.
- People with disabilities are over 1.6 times more likely to live in poor housing or neighbourhood conditions (e.g. leaking roof, damp walls, no central heating, crime/vandalism in the area, etc.). There is a need to improve access to social housing for people with disabilities and to provide grants for modifications to homes to improve access or other supports/devices.

In relation to **experience**:

- People with disabilities accessing public services are between 3 and 3.5 times more likely to experience discrimination than people without disabilities.
- People with disabilities are more than twice as likely to report discrimination related to housing.
- Discrimination for people with disabilities is mostly experienced in the health services followed by the private sector (e.g. financial institutions, shops, pubs and restaurants). Discrimination in private services (such as pubs, shops, restaurants,

financial institutions or housing) is significantly more likely for people with disabilities.

- When people with disabilities are looking for work, or in the workplace, the odds of experiencing work-related discrimination were twice as high compared to those without disabilities.
- The experience of discrimination varies by disability type, with blindness having the greatest risk of discrimination, followed by psychological / emotional conditions.
- People with disabilities are not only more likely to experience discrimination more frequently; when they do, it has a more serious effect on their lives. 18 per cent of people with disabilities who reported experiencing discrimination said it had a 'very serious' effect on them, compared to 10 per cent of those without a disability.

In relation to **identity**:

- Stigma associated with the label of a disability has been shown to influence teacher and parent educational expectations of children and young people.

D. International Submissions

The 2023 report on [The right to work: the employment situation of people with disabilities in Europe](#) identifies issues of situation and experience in relation to the disability ground.

In relation to **situation**:

- EU-level data consistently show how persons with disabilities are less likely to be employed than their non-disabled peers. The latest figures suggest that only 51.3% of persons with disabilities in the European Union are employed, compared to 75.6% of persons without disabilities. The employment rate of persons with disabilities is lowest in Ireland (32.6%), Greece (32.6%) and Croatia (37%). Eurostat data from 2020 shows that the average disability employment gap in the 27 EU Member States was 24.4 pp, but this varies widely across Member States. The highest disability employment gaps were in Ireland (38.6 pp).
- Only 49% of women with disabilities are in employment, compared to 53.9% of men with disabilities, and only 20% work on a full time basis, compared to 29% of men.
- Persons with disabilities are often paid at or below minimum wage, work part time, have precarious work contracts and even work in isolated workshops segregated from the open labour market. Research from Ireland identified disparities in earnings among persons with and without disabilities, as well as disparities based on the type of disability.

- Many persons with disabilities incur additional costs, and must spend more to achieve the same standard of living as persons without disabilities. The impact of the cost of disability is more severe due to low employment and insufficient disability allowance. In a report on the cost of disability in Ireland, more than two thirds of respondents believed that they would earn a higher income if they did not have a disability.

In relation to **experience**:

- The 2019 Eurobarometer report on discrimination in the EU found that 52% of Europeans with disabilities felt discriminated against in employment in the preceding year. Discriminatory practices and attitudes in the recruitment process contribute to the EU disability employment gap.
- Discrimination among employers includes stereotypes that applicants with disabilities lack skills in general, as well as assumptions that applicants with disabilities do not want challenging careers or assignments, or do not want to work at all.

The 2017 report [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports, IHREC, 2017](#), identifies issues of situation, experience and identity in relation to women.

In relation to **situation**:

- women experience a pay gap of 14% and a pension gap of 38%.
- women are prevalent in minimum wage jobs.
- women are concentrated at middle management in the civil service.
- women with a disability are less likely than men with a disability to be active in the labour market, and more likely to work on a part-time basis.
- 81.2% of Traveller women are unemployed.
- growing number of homeless women and children due to domestic violence.
- low levels of women's participation in public life, particularly in relation to Traveller and migrant women.
- barriers to female political participation of childcare, cash, confidence, culture and candidate selection.

In relation to **experience**:

- gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles persist and are perpetuated, encompassing multiple forms for Traveller, Roma, and migrant women.
- gender-based violence (rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and domestic violence).
- women experience pregnancy-related workplace discrimination with job offers rescinded, reduced hours, negative impact on performance rating, and lack of promotion.
- trans women typically experience high levels of discrimination in employment for expressing trans identity.

In relation to **identity**:

- intersectional issues for specific groups of women including Traveller women, women with disabilities, rural women, and women living in direct provision.

The 2022 report [Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, IHREC](#), (submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the follow-up procedure to Ireland's combined 5th to 9th periodic report) identifies issues of situation, experience and identity in relation to Black and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers.

In relation to **situation**:

- Offences aggravated by prejudice can undermine social cohesion and society as a whole.
- People within this group experience barriers to accessing legal representation and/or legal aid. Many respondents in employment and equality cases are represented by legal counsel before the Workplace Relations Commission, which gives rise to an inequality of arms and results in barriers to justice for international protection applicants in a myriad of areas, particularly in the area of housing.

In relation to **experience**:

- Racist hate speech on the Internet and social media. Those experiencing hate speech are currently not adequately or appropriately provided for in legislation.
- Racist hate crime. There is a documented increase in the reporting of racist crimes, including hate speech and graffiti, as well as offences against the person and criminal damage to An Garda Síochána, (in 2020).

In relation to **identity**:

- There is a lack of collection and processing of ‘special category’ data such as race, ethnicity and religion data by many public bodies in Ireland, resulting in an absence of/inaccurate, (and therefore misleading), data regarding the quantity, type, severity etc. of related discrimination (in all its forms), leading to an inability to accurately identify and provide required resources, (including training, guidelines, policies, procedure guidelines etc.).

The 2021 IHREC report on [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) identifies issues of situation, experience and identity across the identified grounds.

In relation to **situation**:

- Women experience gender inequality in the labour market. Women had lower rates of employment in 2019 (68 per cent) than men (79 per cent). Gender pay and pension gaps stand at approximately 14%, and 38%, respectively.
- Ireland continues to have amongst the lowest employment rates for disabled persons in the EU (32.2% compared to 50.6% in the EU in 2017).
- Women, lone parents, young people, migrants, ethnic minorities, including Travellers, and disabled persons experience significant barriers in meeting their right to decent work.
- The consistent poverty rate was 5% in 2020, the ‘at risk of poverty’ rate was 13.2% and 15.6% of the population experienced enforced deprivation. Individuals living in households where there was one adult and one or more children aged under 18 had the highest consistent poverty rate at almost 22%.
- Those most at risk of experiencing poverty in 2020 were those unable to work due to disability or illness (33.7%), and the unemployed (32%).
- 38% of those living in local authority housing experience housing deprivation and 28% of local authority houses are overcrowded.
- As of September 2021, there were 8,475 homeless people in Ireland.
- Disabled people are significantly over-represented among the homeless population, 1 in 4 people who are homeless are disabled people. 29% of persons living with a disability experience housing quality issues, when compared to those without a disability (21%).
- The Commission remains deeply concerned over the inadequacy and shortage of culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation in Ireland. The persistent State failure to provide Traveller accommodation fundamentally undermines Traveller’s culture and identity.

- Almost 3,000 disabled people live in congregated settings, where many experience institutional living conditions. More than 1,300 disabled people under the age of 65 are inappropriately housed in nursing homes for older people because they cannot access supports to enable them to live in the community. Over 1,250 disabled people live at home with a primary carer over the age of 70.
- There are barriers to the electoral process for disabled persons.
- Ireland ranks among the world's most expensive countries for childcare.
- Women are significantly over-represented amongst employees who avail of reduced hours in order to facilitate the combination of care and paid work, contributing to gender inequality in the labour market.

In relation to **experience**:

- Travellers and Black people experience particularly high rates of labour market discrimination, both when seeking work and in the workplace. Minority ethnic women in Ireland face cumulative discrimination, including in relation to pay and promotion.
- Lone parents and their children, minority ethnic groups including Travellers, migrants, and disabled people experience persistent housing discrimination.
- Irish Travellers continue to experience high rates of housing discrimination and racism in accessing housing.
- Disabled people report high levels of discrimination in access to housing.

In relation to **identity**:

- The Commission has repeatedly highlighted the considerable shortfalls in equality data.
- There has not been a structured approach to ensuring public bodies can meet their statutory duties under the Irish Sign Language Act 2017.
- Ethnic minority young people report that racism leads to feeling a 'constant alertness' that makes some anxious, depressed or insecure about their own identity, while others report internalised self-loathing or being ashamed of their identity.

4. Validation Meeting

An online validation meeting was facilitated with a number of civil society organisations to review a draft of the assessment of equality and human rights issues. It addressed the questions of: are the equality and human rights issues we have identified relevant and of priority for the group(s) that your organisation represents?; Are these issues correctly

formulated?; and Are there any important gaps in regard to the equality and human rights issues for the identified group(s) that that your organisation represents? A number of changes were proposed and these were accepted by the working group in finalising the assessment of equality and human rights issues.