



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council

Leitrim County Council Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

Appendix 1

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Introduction

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the “Duty”) places a statutory obligation on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of those to whom they provide services and staff when carrying out their duty.

This duty must be considered in the context of strategic planning in line with Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 which requires public bodies having regard to our functions, purpose, size and resources available to:

- Assess – set out in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to its functions and purpose
- Address – set out in its strategic plan the policies, plans and actions in place of proposed to be put in place to address those issues
- Report – report on developments and achievements in its annual report.

The identified groups for the Duty are:

- Those groups covered by the nine protected grounds under equality legislation: gender (including gender expression, gender identity and sex characteristics); civil status; family status (including lone parents and people with caring responsibilities); age; disability (including mobility, sensory, and intellectual disabilities, mental health issues, and chronic illness); sexual orientation; race (encompassing skin colour, nationality and ethnic origin); religion (any or no religious belief), and membership of the Traveller community.
- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission recommend that those at risk of or experiencing poverty and social inclusion are also included as an identified ground for the Duty, thereby adding a further ground of ‘socio-economic status’.
- Rights holders under the various international human rights instruments. (Source: *Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, Irish human Rights and Equality Commission, 2019*)

Background & Assessment of Human Rights Issues

This assessment has been compiled from an evidence base of current equality and human rights research and reports, both local and national. It is not an evaluation of Leitrim County Council or its current actions to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights.

The five values identified by Leitrim County Council that motivate our ambitions for equality and human rights in implementing the Duty are used as a framework to set out this assessment of the equality and human rights issues. These values are:

- Dignity
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Participation
- Choice

This assessment of equality and human rights issues has been developed in amalgamating work done across the departments of Leitrim County Council to assess the equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups for the Duty of relevance to their functions and purpose.

These equality and human rights issues relate to the:

- Situation of the group in terms of their access to resources and any 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 choose to give expression to their identity/identities and the specific needs that arise from this.

The issues identified in this assessment are relevant across all the identified groups for the Duty and for groups at the intersections of the grounds identified, unless otherwise stated. In addressing these issues, cognisance is taken of the specific oppressions experienced by the identified groups.

Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

Leitrim County Councils assessment of equality and human rights for the Duty is evidence-based in drawing from:

- A. Local Policy Strategies
- B. National Policy Strategies

Dignity

Treating people in a way that acknowledges and respects their inherent value as human beings.

Equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups and of relevance for the work of Leitrim County Council:

- Stereotypes, prejudice and false assumptions in relation to the identified groups, including:
Negative attitudes, stereotypical representations, both conscious and unconscious bias, exclusion stemming from implicit biases, which can occur when a solution is designed based on the assumption that others share the same experiences and perspectives ('everyone is like me'), misunderstanding of the end user due to poorly defined or narrow user profiles.
- Discrimination faced by identified groups occurs at both the individual and systemic levels, including:
Disparities in employment and access to job opportunities, challenges in accessing services, barriers to securing housing, intersectional discrimination experienced by individuals who belong to multiple identified groups
- Harassment and sexual harassment experienced by the identified groups, including:
At work; when accessing services, in the public realm. Segregation within different occupations and across various job levels, particularly affecting the identified groups in particular of women and men, of the identified groups in particular of women and men. Hostile political and public discourse targeting minority groups.

- Online threats, including:
Cybercrime, online sexual exploitation; data breaches and privacy violations; psychological harms such as cyberbullying, trolling, social media addiction, and excessive virtual engagement at the expense of real-world interaction, the spread of disinformation and fake news, and the proliferation of hate speech.
- Domestic and other forms of gender-based violence.
- Social isolation and loneliness experienced by some of the identified groups
- Pressure to conceal one's identity in the workplace or when accessing services, along with the failure to create inclusive, welcoming, and safe environments for people from diverse backgrounds.
- Insufficient training for employers, service providers and their employees on issues of equality, discrimination, and stereotyping.
- Limited awareness and access to information among identified groups regarding their rights and how to exercise them.
- High levels of under-reporting of discrimination, due to factors such as lack of confidence, limited information, fear of retaliation, and a belief that reporting will not lead to meaningful change.
- Inadequate systems for handling complaints of discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment, including poor communication about the procedures that are in place
- Low expectations among identified groups of being treated with dignity, respect, or understanding, which discourages engagement with institutions.

Diversity

Diversity is recognised as a strength, with difference actively welcomed, valued, and accommodated in both service provision and employment practice

Equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups and of relevance for the work of Leitrim County Council:

- Many employment and workplace settings remain inaccessible or insufficiently adaptable to the practical needs arising from the diversity of the identified groups. Including:
Inadequate consideration of inclusive workspace design and facilities, Lack of flexibility in job and task design, Limited availability and uptake of flexible working arrangements, family-friendly working and leave arrangements, including reproductive leave and carers leave, and opportunities to avail of these at all levels of the organisation, inflexibility of retirement options made available and availed of, including issues of mandatory retirement and early retirement, lack of provision of and access to assistive technology and issues of disconnect and marginalisation as a result of availing of flexible workplace arrangements, in particular remote and hybrid working.
- Communication content, formats, and channels often fail to effectively reach or engage the identified groups, including:
A lack of consideration for language diversity, including the absence of Irish Sign Language (ISL) and translated materials, failure to take account of literacy barriers and failure to reflect, Failure to address literacy barriers, such as the use of overly complex language or inaccessible formats and lack of inclusive and representative imagery, which fails to reflect the diversity of the community and limits meaningful connection with diverse audiences.
- Inaccessible Services and Rigid Service Delivery. Many services remain inaccessible due to a lack of adaptability and responsiveness to the diverse needs of the identified group, including:
Service design and service delivery systems, inaccessible IT systems and failure to provide additional supports, including assistive technology, to enable access and participation.

- Inaccessible housing and homeless services for the identified groups, including: Lack of support for necessary housing adaptations, particularly for older people and persons with disabilities, shortage of age-appropriate housing, especially for older adults and young people transitioning to independent living, failure to take account of the practical implications of diversity across the identified groups in the design and delivery of homeless services; and fears of entering emergency accommodation.
- Lack of universal design leading to access barriers, including: Infrastructure, outdoor and indoor facilities public realm, workplaces and service provision premises.
- Lack of collection and analysis of equality data for the identified groups, including the failure to break down general population data by specific group categories.
- Lack of training on diversity and the practical implications of diversity, and on inclusive processes, services and workplaces, for management, staff and interview boards, limiting awareness and understanding of diversity and how to respond to diversity, including legal requirements in relation to this.
- Lack of acknowledgement of intersectionality and the diversity within the identified groups and inadequate response to this intersectionality, in particular in targeted measures.

Inclusion

Inclusion means making sure that everyone has the necessary resources, support, and opportunities to actively and equally take part in all areas of life in Leitrim

Equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups and of relevance for the work of Leitrim County Council:

- Homelessness and housing insecurity experienced by the identified groups, including:
Overcrowding, hidden homelessness, difficulties in exiting homelessness; and lack of social housing.
- The identified groups face housing deprivation and inadequate housing and living conditions.
- Labour market barriers for the identified groups, including:
High levels of unemployment, under-representation in the workforce, increased likelihood of leaving employment, underemployment, concentration in low-paid jobs, limited access to decent work, and over-representation in part-time roles.
- Barriers to career progression, the identified groups face barriers to career advancement, limited opportunities for promotion, and inadequate access to workplace supports and training
- Barriers to entrepreneurship for the identified groups.
Recruitment and promotion systems that are inadequate for the identified groups, including:
Insufficient outreach, poorly designed job advertisements, lack of diversity on selection panels, unsuitable job descriptions, inaccessible procedures, and a lack of transparency.
- Educational disadvantages faced by the identified groups, including low educational attainment, early school leaving caused by negative experiences within the education system, and lack of recognition for qualifications earned abroad.

- Limited opportunities for the identified groups to develop new skills, including in the workplace, amid existing skills gaps.
- Health inequalities among the identified groups, particularly regarding the prevalence of and response to mental health issues, which have been worsened by the pandemic
- Poverty, risk of poverty, and persistent poverty affecting the identified groups, including:
Concentrated in specific areas, experienced by specific groups, lack of supports for additional cost of disability, barriers for Roma to access necessary services due to application of the Habitual Residence Condition and lack of documentation available to them and in-work poverty.
- Poverty, risk of poverty, and persistent poverty affecting the identified groups, including geographic concentration, impact on specific groups, insufficient support for additional disability-related costs

Participation

Participation means that people from diverse backgrounds have opportunities to voice their opinions on issues and decisions that impact them.

Equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups and of relevance for the work of Leitrim County Council:

- Exclusion and under-representation of the identified groups in local democracy, including:
Fear of participation, barriers related to childcare, finances, culture, and confidence, challenges in candidate selection, obstacles to voter registration and electoral involvement, diminished trust in democratic systems, and a lack of role models.
- Insufficient consultation and meaningful engagement with the identified groups, along with a failure to create inclusive and accessible consultation processes.
- Under-representation of the identified groups in decision-making bodies, or the absence of such inclusive structures.
- Insufficient recognition and support for civil society organizations representing the identified groups to fulfil advocacy roles, along with inadequate dialogue and engagement with these organizations.
- Lack of feedback to the identified groups on foot of participation and consultation.
- Lack of capacity, know-how and resources among the identified groups, and lack of supports, to engage effectively in consultations and in structures established to contribute to decision-making.

Choice

Choice means recognising and respecting the preferences of diverse individuals by providing appropriate options in service delivery and employment wherever possible.

Equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups and of relevance for the work of Leitrim County Council:

- Limited choice for the identified groups due to one-size-fits-all approaches.
- Lack of options that allow the identified groups to exercise meaningful choice.
- Lack of accessible information and support needed for the identified groups to make informed decisions.
- Failure to properly identify and respond to the preferences of people within the identified groups.
- Barriers to autonomy experienced by the identified groups, including:
Limited knowledge of how to access and navigate available supports.
Being confined to institutionalised care settings, lack of information on supported decision-making for disabled individuals. Low confidence and insufficient time allocated for meaningful engagement with service providers, financial dependence and limited understanding of financial matters.

Local Policies:

[County Leitrim Age Friendly Strategy 2022 - 2026](#)

Age Friendly Leitrim

Leitrim's Age Friendly Strategy builds on the previous Age Friendly Strategy and is informed by the World Health Organisations (WHO) Global Age Friendly City & Communities Programme and the National Age Friendly Programme.

Leitrim Age Friendly Alliance brings together older people, public, private, community and voluntary service providers seeking to improve outcomes in the planning and delivery of our services to older people.

Our Vision

To develop an inclusive, equitable County in which older people can live full, active, valued and healthy lives.

Our Values

Our core values aligned to that of the National Age Friendly Programme are:

- Efficiency
- Collaboration
- Participation
- Innovation
- Partnership
- Implementation

[Leitrim Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022 – 2026](#)

Leitrim County Council wish to deliver appropriate homes for People with Disabilities under the 2022-2026 Housing Delivery Action Plan. The assessment of housing need defines Disability under four classifications: sensory disability, mental health disability, physical disability and intellectual disability. Under the most recent Housing Needs Assessment for Co. Leitrim there were 50 no. households assessed as having a basis of need under one of these disability categories.

During 2021 Leitrim County Council prepared a new Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with Disabilities. The Plan seeks to achieve better co-ordination and delivery of housing and related support services for people with disabilities and to strategically plan for the short, medium, and long-term housing needs of this group. The Strategic Plan outlined a number of actions to be implemented in County Leitrim. These include:

- To reuse vacant adapted or disability designed dwelling to fulfil the housing needs of households on the housing disability list
- Universal design incorporated into new builds
- Tenants of a disability unit which has had specific disability adaptation cannot purchase their accommodation as to guarantee its return to the Local Authority's stock
- Transfer option to a more suitable unit will always be favoured to adaptation works; and
- Suite of private adaptation grants to facilitate independent living at home for older persons or persons with a disability.

[Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029](#)

The Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 includes an ambition for the County. The goals, objectives and actions are focused on key areas identified during the consultation and analysis process including education and skills, economy and employment, inclusion and wellbeing, climate and the environment, and tourism and heritage.

The community elements of the plan have been developed and approved by the Leitrim LCDC. It includes goals, objectives and actions related to enhancing inclusion, public transport, wellbeing and health, education and training, the culture and creative sector and sustainability.

Part 8.1 Gaol 1 of The Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029, the implementation plan, outlines how Leitrim County Council will continue to develop and support initiatives related to community wellbeing and inclusion including:

- (a) Implementing structures and services that ensure a more inclusive society for older people
- (b) Expanding and delivering the disability sport and recreation programme
- (c) Developing the Youth Theatre programme for children and young people with additional needs
- (d) Delivering Healthy Ireland programmes to support physical and mental wellbeing
- (e) Enhancing infrastructure and developing programmes to promote a more prosperous, peaceful and stable society in Leitrim and the Border Region
- (f) Delivering the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
- (g) Promoting reading and literacy development, learning and information, and community and culture in our libraries
- (h) Developing initiatives to promote the integration of our new communities
- (i) Re-establishing the interagency working group for the Traveller community
- (j) Nominating a Traveller Community representative to the PPN

[Culture and creativity Strategy 2023-2027](#)

The Creative Ireland vision for Leitrim is to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of the county and its creative sector by placing creativity at the centre of people's lives.

To achieve this, we will employ a cross departmental approach, and work in partnership with agencies and organisations across the county.

The Strategic Priorities for Leitrim

3. Wellbeing, Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity.

Creative Ireland's Progress Report 2020: A Creative Response recognised the powerful contribution of creativity to stimulate positive health and wellbeing. The core proposition of the Creative Ireland Programme is that participation in such activities drives personal and collective creativity, with significant implications for individual and societal wellbeing. While engagement in creative activities can have positive impacts on any member of society, the inability to be able to access those activities or to explore creativity because of economic, geographic, language, physical or any other form of barrier, can have an adverse impact on wellbeing, not only because of the absence of that activity, but also for the compounding sense of isolation and stigmatisation that such barriers place on people when taken as a whole.

In addition to working to remove barriers to participation in creative activities, there are many people throughout all strands of society who are not part of any community group, who wouldn't consider themselves to be creative, and have never had the opportunity or invitation to explore their creativity. To address this, we will develop a new strand of programmes that are designed to be more visible and accessible to individuals that are not members of any group and work with media partners to help ensure their success.

Among the actions we will pursue under this pillar are:

- To work with relevant agencies and organisations to identify specific groups and cohorts that encounter barriers to participation in creative activities; to develop a greater understanding around these barriers; and to devise strategies and approaches to help overcome them.
- To develop skillsets of professionals in the creative sector to work with diverse communities in order to facilitate such projects and to enhance the sustainability of those working in the creative sector.

[Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029](#)

Leitrim County Council is the authority responsible for implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029.

The Local Authority co-operates with other public and voluntary agencies as well as adjoining Local Authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers.

The Council has made considerable progress over the lifetime of the previous Traveller Accommodation Programmes to increase the supply of accommodation to meet the housing needs of the Traveller Community.

Of the 73 families currently residing in Leitrim,

- 39 are accommodated in Standard Local Authority Housing,
- 12 are accommodated in Traveller Specific Accommodation,
- 4 are accommodated in housing provided by an Approved Housing Body
- 7 have been provided with social housing support under the Long-Term Leasing/Rental Accommodation Scheme or the Housing Assistance Payment (H.A.P).
- Of the 73 families residing in the county, 62 have had their long-term accommodation needs addressed by the Council. In this regard, 85% of the Traveller Community in Leitrim have had their long-term accommodation needs addressed by the Council.

National Policies:

[The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020 \(2014\)](#)

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%. Over 50% of young people who are unemployed (20-24 years) have no more than lower secondary education

In 2014, 23.9% of young people aged 15-24 years were unemployed. The trend is down, from almost 80,000 on average in 2009 to 47,000 on average in 2014

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. It is estimated that 20% of 16 year olds are weekly drinkers.

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

Young people identified mental health, education, inclusion, employment, access to services, youthwork/youth organisations, and supporting transitions as areas requiring a focus.

Almost one-quarter of 9-16 year-olds (23%) surveyed in Ireland in 2012 experienced some form of bullying, online or offline (the latter being the most frequent)

Young people, especially young girls, are particularly vulnerable to negative self-image and media pressure surrounding body image.

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

For those young people in Ireland who self-identify as LGBT, the most common age is 12 years, while the most common age at which they begin the process of 'coming out' to others is 17 years. This can often be a time of profound isolation for young LGBT people.

[The LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#)

LGBTI+ young people experience high levels of mental health problems, including higher rates of severe stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm, and attempted suicide.

In relation to experience:

LGBTI+ young people face challenges of discrimination, victimisation, stigmatisation, and abuse

LGBTI+ young people face challenges of difficulties coming out in the workplace, particularly for transgender people

LGBTI+ young people face challenges of difficulties associated with acceptance of LGBTI+ identity by families, communities, and broader society.

In relation to identity:

Limited knowledge and understanding of LGBTI+ issues by mainstream service providers and professionals who encounter LGBTI+ young people

LGBTI+ young people face challenges of gender-segregated spaces, such as single-sex schools, toilets and changing facilities, for transgender and non-binary young people

Research and data-gathering mechanisms for LGBTI+ people in Ireland and internationally remain in their infancy and require substantial development. No official data on transgender or non-binary people. Intersex young people are another cohort that

[National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021](#)

The importance of workplace inclusion was underscored at almost every workshop with participants reporting that significant barriers still persist for LGBTI+ employees

LGBTI+ people in rural areas have pointed to the risk of being isolated.
In relation to experience:

In recent CSO data, the highest rates of discrimination were reported by people who identify as LGBTI+ (33.2%), followed by persons from non-white ethnic backgrounds (33.1%), unemployed (30.2%) and non-Irish (26.7%)

Threats in relation to safety and security experienced by LGBTI+ people. LGBTI+ people do not always feel safe in the public space and on public transport

LGBTI+ people continue to experience unacceptable levels of harassment, discrimination in some workplaces and face particular health issues

The need for increased and non- stereotypical representation of LGBTI+ identities arose as a consistent theme throughout the consultation process.
In relation to identity:

For LGBTI+ people to enjoy access to services on an equal basis with other people, mainstream services will need to ensure that they apply a LGBTI+ lens to service provision

From a review of relevant literature, 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

LGBTI+ community constitutes a rich diversity of identities each with specific needs and perspectives that cannot be addressed in a homogenous manner.

[The Arts Council Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Strategy](#)

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, their ethnicity or religion, their sexual orientation or gender identity, their family status, their age, their membership of the Traveller Community, or through lack of accommodation of a disability

Women artists across a range of artistic disciplines continue to encounter serious impediments to advancing their careers and repertoire in a way that equates with their male peers.

[National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028](#)

There are five sections in the Strategy:

Section I: provides key background information on the situation faced by the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. It shows that Travellers and Roma continue to experience much higher rates of economic disadvantage and social exclusion than similarly disadvantaged communities

Section II: outlines the vision for this Strategy, one that will be realised through respecting and promoting the diversity of identities and perspectives of all members of the community, improving the quality of life and wellbeing for Travellers and Roma, thus enabling them to participate fully in Ireland's social, economic, cultural, and political life.

Section III: highlights how the Strategy was developed through the particular 'lens' of equality and human rights. It emphasises the importance of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the 'Public Sector Duty') and of addressing intersectionality. The Public Sector Duty provided a coherent framework for the development of the Strategy, comprising an assessment of the equality and human rights issues pertaining to Travellers and Roma under each of the nine themes in this Strategy, and devising an action plan to address the issues raised in the assessment.

Section IV: outlines how the Strategy will be implemented. The high-level objectives will be delivered through two 2-year action plans, which will outline Key Performance Indicators, responsibilities and timelines for implementation of actions. The first Action Plan is published alongside this Strategy. It sets out actions for the period 2024–2028 and indicative actions for the period 2027–2028.

Section V: outlines the nine themes in the Strategy, which are closely aligned with those in the EU Roma Strategic Framework on Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-30 Each theme has its own strategic outcome and strategic objectives:

Theme 1: Combatting Racism and Discrimination

Theme 2: Children and Young People

Theme 3: Gender Equality

Theme 4: Health and Wellbeing

Theme 5: Employment and Enterprise

Theme 6: Accommodation

Theme 7: Education

Theme 8: Culture, Heritage and Identity

Theme 9: Participation, Empowerment, Cooperation and Accountability

[The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022](#)

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.

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 with people with a disability.

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.



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