

Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Statement

GRETB

February 2023

1. Introduction

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, Section 42, requires public bodies, in the implementation of all their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect the human rights of staff and service-users.

Public bodies are required to:

- Set out in an accessible manner an assessment of the human rights and equality issues relevant to their functions and purpose;
- Establish the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues; and
- Report annually on developments and achievements in this regard.

The Duty encompasses the following identified groups:

- the groups covered by the nine grounds under the equality legislation: gender (including gender identity), civil status, family status (including lone parents and carers), age (young and older people), disability, sexual orientation, race (Black and minority ethnic people), religion and membership of the Traveller community; and
- the groups, encompassed by the ground of socio-economic status, at risk of or experiencing poverty and exclusion.

This document sets out the foundations for the implementation of the duty in GRETB and includes an Equality and Human Rights Values Statement, which underpins GRETB's values-led approach, and the assessment of equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups that are of relevance to GRETB, which is the first step required of public bodies in implementing the Duty.

It identifies the steps taken and to be taken to drive implementation of the Duty within GRETB. A copy of the Implementation plan is available on request.

2. Equality and Human Rights Values Statement

The values espoused in this statement are central to our organisational culture and motivate our pursuit of equality and human rights goals. Each value is defined and then concretised with a statement of priority and a statement of purpose

In making these values explicit in this way we seek to ensure we are coherent and consistent in living out these values in our priorities and processes as an organisation. This Equality and Human Rights Values Statement provides the framework within which we are implementing the Duty.

Our Equality and Human Rights Values

Dignity

Autonomy

Participation

Inclusion

Social Justice

Environmental Justice

Dignity is about care and respect for people. It involves embracing diversity and protecting, promoting and fulfilling people's rights, including those of privacy. It means working with people in a non-judgmental and fair manner, based on a parity of esteem.

Statement of priority: GRETB strives for an education sector that recognises and celebrates diversity across the identified groups and to reflect this in our learning spaces, workspaces, and processes.

Statement of process: GRETB will work in a manner that recognises the diversity of our learners and staff, and treats them with fairness and respect.

Autonomy is about independence, self-determination, asserting boundaries and personal space, choice, and a bottom-up approach. It involves being flexible in meeting changing, emerging, and contextual needs, and supporting a capacity to make choices and be involved in decision-making about these.

Statement of priority: GRETB strives to maximise the options and choices available to our learners and staff from the identified groups.

Statement of process: GRETB will work in a manner that empowers and supports the diversity of our learners and staff to articulate and explore their ambitions, to experiment between options, and to make informed choices.

Participation is about meaningful participation in decision-making and processes of accountability. It involves the right to have a voice, be heard, and pose a challenge. It includes open debate in building shared visions with spaces for difference and compromise.

Statement of priority: GRETB strives to ensure it has structures and processes to enable learners and staff from the identified groups to participate meaningfully in decisions, alongside opportunities for open dialogue.

Statement of process: GRETB will work in a manner that meaningfully engages the diversity of our learners and staff in decisions that impact on their learning or work life.

Inclusion is about enabling and recognising the right of people, in particular those experiencing disadvantage and exclusion, to participate by accessing opportunities and achieving outcomes as learners, staff, and beneficiaries.

Statement of priority: GRETB strives for effective participation in learning and career opportunities by learners and staff from the identified groups.

Statement of process: GRETB will work in a manner that provides accessible opportunities for the diversity of learners and staff, through flexible processes that ensure specific needs that arise from diversity are identified and addressed.

Social Justice is about transparency and fairness in the distribution of educational, cultural, economic, and other resources. It involves proactive targeted approaches to support those experiencing injustice.

Statement of priority: GRETB strives to have learners and staff from the identified groups in the organisation, and to enable them to achieve fulfilling outcomes.

Statement of process: GRETB will work in a manner that is proactive, fair, and transparent in seeking a diversity of learners and staff, alongside providing supportive education and work environments.

Environmental Justice is about recognising the right to a clean, safe, and sustained environment for this and future generations. It involves a duty to proactively address and respond to climate change and its impacts, in particular on marginalised groups and communities.

Statement of priority: GRETB strives to: contribute to awareness of environmental sustainability; build a capacity among learners and staff to respond to the challenges of environmental sustainability; and ensure our facilities meet the 2040 carbon neutral target.

Statement of process: GRETB will work in a manner that provides training and education in green principles and initiatives, and that creates an engagement with environmental sustainability among learners and staff.

3. Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

The assessment of equality and human rights issues involves establishing the issues faced by the identified groups. Its purpose is to enable GRETB to implement the Duty by tracking its current responses to these issues in order to further develop and expand these responses as found to be necessary. It is applied, for this purpose, in the development and review of GRETB plans, policies, programmes, and procedures.

The assessment of equality and human rights issues is based on an examination of the situation, experience, and identity of the identified groups to establish the equality and human rights issues that they face that are relevant to the functions of GRETB. The issues identified are relevant across the identified groups unless otherwise indicated. The identified groups are the:

- groups covered by the nine grounds under the equality legislation: gender (including gender identity), civil status, family status (including lone parents and carers), age (young and older people), disability, sexual orientation, race (Black and minority ethnic people), religion and membership of the Traveller community; and
- groups, encompassed by the ground of socio-economic status, at risk of or experiencing poverty and exclusion.

The functions of GRETB stretch across three directorates:

- FET: providing a wide range of course for those over sixteen years of age including re-skilling and up-skilling programmes for employees and those unemployed or inactive, assisting individuals to progress to higher education who might otherwise not do so; and providing 'second chance' education to those who have not completed second level education;
- Schools: managing and operating a number of second-level schools and multi-faith community national schools; and
- OSD: organisation support and development supports the internal functions of human resources, finance, ICT, and corporate services.

These directorates encompass the core functions of: service provider; employer; and corporate services. The issues identified are relevant to all functions unless otherwise indicated.

Our equality and human rights values provide the frame within which this assessment was undertaken.

Dignity is about care and respect for people. It involves embracing diversity and protecting, promoting and fulfilling people's rights. It means working with people in a non-judgmental and fair manner, based on a parity of esteem.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to the value of dignity and relevant to the functions of GRET, are:

- Discrimination and the expectation of discrimination:
 - with particular reference to discrimination in recruitment and within the workplace; and discrimination in the provision of services.
- Verbal and physical abuse:
 - with particular reference to gender-based violence and sexual assault, including domestic violence; sexual harassment and harassment; and bullying, including cyber bullying.
- Unwelcoming environments:
 - with particular reference to 'soft' barriers of discouragement; having to hide one's identity; and low expectations of groups such as Travellers and people with disabilities.
- Segregation and isolation:
 - with particular reference to educational provision that is not inclusive; segregation in housing provision; and experiences of isolation in rural settings, particularly due to lack of transport.
- Negative public discourse:
 - with particular reference to hate speech; stereotypes; and internalised stereotypes.
- Abuse of personal information, privacy, and confidentiality.
- Limited general capacity in relation to equality and diversity:
 - with particular reference to limited education on human rights and equality for the general public; and lack of training on equality and diversity for employers and service providers.
- Lack of knowledge of rights and lack of confidence and support to exercise rights among groups exposed to discrimination.

Autonomy is about independence, self-determination, choice and a bottom-up approach. It involves being flexible in meeting changing, emerging, and contextual needs, and supporting a capacity to make choices and be involved in decision-making.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to the value of autonomy and relevant to the functions of GRET, are:

- Economic dependence:
 - with particular reference to insufficient income, gendered roles in families; the lack of material means available to young people in families; and the additional cost of living for people with disabilities.

- Barriers to making choices
 - with particular reference to lack of accessible information; limited supports to navigate options available; and poor communication of supports available.
- Limited range of options offered and made available:
 - with particular reference to areas such as education and training programmes and initiatives.
- Societal norms and normative assumptions of the identified groups:
 - with particular reference to how societal norms limit the options made available to the groups; and shape the expectations of these groups and the support and encouragement offered to them.
- Institutionalised settings that limit choices and options available:
 - with particular reference to direct provision for asylum seekers; and institution-based care provision – *service provision and corporate affairs functions*.
- Capacity to make choices:
 - with particular reference to internalised stereotypes that limit choice making by the identified groups; lack of awareness of available supports; and lack of skills for informed choice making.

Participation is about meaningful participation in decision-making and processes of accountability. It involves the right to be heard and to pose a challenge. It includes open debate in building shared visions with spaces for difference and compromise.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to the value of participation and relevant to the functions of GRETB, are:

- Groups and group members not being heard, not having a voice, and not having influence:
 - with particular reference to involvement in decision-making processes; and to under-representation and not having a place on decision-making structures.
- Lack of procedures for making complaints and having complaints effectively and efficiently resolved.
- Lack of a platform for the collective voice of identified groups to be effectively articulated:
 - with particular reference to the lack of well-resourced community organisations, community networks, learner forums or employee forums representing the identified groups.
- Limited articulation of individual perspectives by members of the identified groups:
 - with particular reference to low levels of confidence; and fears of victimisation.

Inclusion is about enabling and recognising the right of people, in particular those experiencing disadvantage and exclusion, to participate.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to the value of inclusion and relevant to the functions of GRETB, are:

- Failure to make adaptations for diversity and meet specific needs of groups:
 - with particular reference to inflexible and inappropriate job design; inflexibility in the design and provision of services and opportunities; and

limited capacity to appreciate and respond to the practical implications of difference and diversity.

- Invisibility for diversity:
 - with particular reference to lack of focus on diversity in educational curricula; giving tangible visibility to diversity in workplace and service provision settings; communication activities; and inadequate data systems to capture data across the ten grounds, allowing for the right to self-identify, including the absence of an ethnic identifier.
- Inadequate response to caring responsibilities:
 - with particular reference to the unequal sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men; the lack of affordable and accessible childcare; and the absence of adequate work life balance workplace arrangements.
- Lack of universal design for accessibility:
 - with particular reference to disabling societal environments in relation to buildings, ICT, and transport.

Social justice is about transparency and fairness in the distribution of economic, educational, cultural and other resources. It involves proactive targeted approaches to support those experiencing injustice.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to the value of social justice and relevant to the functions of GRETB, are:

- Low educational status:
 - with particular reference to early school leaving; school enrolment issues for migrants; poor educational outcomes for Travellers and people with disabilities; high drop-out rates for LGBT people; difficulties in educational transitions for people with disabilities and Travellers; and limited access to adult learning for older people.
- Low skills status:
 - with particular reference to lack of access to and outcomes from training provision; gender imbalance in STEM fields and apprenticeships; and lack of progression for Travellers and people with disabilities from training experiences.
- Unemployment and under-employment:
 - with particular reference to low levels of labour market participation for people with disabilities, migrants, Travellers, and young people; lower overall employment rate for women and higher concentration in part-time and precarious work; early retirement and the absence of gradual retirement opportunities for older people; and lack of diversity in public sector employment.
- Lack of access to promotion:
 - with particular reference to the lack of women in senior positions and the lack of diversity among senior management – *employment function*.
- Low income:
 - with particular reference to in-work poverty and low pay; and the gender pay gap and gender pension gap.
- Poverty:

- with particular reference to socio-economic status; and to the intersections of this group with the other identified groups.
- Disadvantaged housing and accommodation status:
 - with particular reference to housing insecurity in the private rented sector; poor living conditions for Travellers; lack of housing provision in place of and for those exiting direct provision; and homelessness – *service provision and corporate affairs functions*.
- Unequal health status:
 - with particular reference to mental health issues for young people, Travellers and LGBT people; addiction issues for young people; and mortality rates and suicide levels among the Traveller community.
- Digital exclusion:
 - with particular reference to access to broadband and equipment in a context of increased digitalisation of public services and home-working.
- Lack of legal status for asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants.

Environmental justice is about recognising the right to a clean, safe, and sustained environment for this and future generations. It involves a concern for climate change and its impacts, in particular on marginalised groups and communities.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to the value of environmental justice and relevant to the functions of GRET, are:

- Uneven and disproportionate impact of climate change on groups, based on levels of socio-economic disadvantage.
- Limited access to the conditions for the resilience required to adapt to and manage the changes that result from climate change and environmental degradation.
- Lack of access to education, awareness raising, and capacity building on adapting for, mitigating of, and impact reduction of climate change.
- Lack of information on environmental rights and neglect of environmental justice as an issue.

4. Implementing the Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty

Implementation of the Duty **first** involves steps to:

- Identify and assess the equality and human rights issues relevant to the functions of GRET as employer and service provider, using the frame of agreed equality and human rights values.
- Involve relevant civil society organisations in considering and responding to a final draft of this assessment of equality and human rights issues.

The **key moments** each year for implementing the Duty are:

- ⇒ Preparation and review and update of the Strategic Performance Agreement with Solas.
- ⇒ Preparation of the annual FAR plan.
- ⇒ Development and review of the GRET Strategy Statement.
- ⇒ Development and review of internal employment and service provision policies and procedures.

⇒ Course planning.

At each of these key moments, implementation of the Duty involves steps to:

- Test plans close to final draft stage to assess if they include adequate and sufficient actions to address the relevant issues assessed and if they contribute to the statement of priority for each value.
- Test procedures close to final draft stage to assess if they include adequate and sufficient processes to address the relevant issues assessed and if they contribute to the statement of process for each value.

Annually implementation of the Duty involves steps to:

- Report annually on progress in addressing the issues assessed and in implementing the Duty, through the GRET B Annual Report, as part of reporting under the FAR plan, and on the website.
- Participate on the Collaborative Forum established by Galway City LCDC for enabling peer support in implementing the Duty.

An annual implementation plan will be prepared in relation to the Duty, based on this action plan. It will set out:

- ⇒ activities to be implemented to engage the equality and human rights values.
- ⇒ plans being prepared or reviewed during the year, where the Duty is to be implemented.
- ⇒ procedures being prepared or reviewed during the year, where the Duty is to be implemented.
- ⇒ those responsible for implementation of the actions under the plan.

The first implementation plan is set out in section 5 below.

The steps identified in this action plan and the annual implementation plan can be assisted by tools developed by Galway City LCDC, with the input of the GRET B. These steps would involve staff and civil society participation, and an approach to which participation is outlined in these tools.

5. - Annual Action Plan 2024 and report 2023.

Leadership

The CE and Directors Group will provide leadership for implementing the Duty through:

Action 2023	Update	Action 2024	Responsible
Consideration, approval and sign off on the implementation	Completed and approved and reviewed for 2023	Plan to be agreed for 2024	SLT and Working Group

plan for each year; and review annually			
Communicate commitment to and ambition for the Duty to staff and stakeholders, and ensure the conditions are in place to drive its implementation.	GRETB have signed up to the Traveller Interagency Framework to be distributed to all schools and centres which is currently being printed	Public Sector Duty poster to be designed and distributed to all schools and centres for display.	PSD working group, all Senior Managers in OSD, Principals and Centre and Service Managers in FET
Resource the Working group to drive the implementation of the action plan	2 meetings took place in 2023. Review membership to achieve balance across the pillars	Schedule 3 meetings for 2024	SLT and Working Group

- **Capacity**

Action 2023	Update	Action 2024	Responsible
Build on the foundations in place to Implement the duty	Public Sector Duty now part of staff induction	Develop and record a presentation on the PSD for GRETB Continue to present at Induction	Working Group and HR
Preparing and reviewing upcoming plans and policies against the Public Sector Duty Statement	Strategy Statement and FET FAR Application reviewed	LCYP Plan and Music Generation Plans to be assessed in 2024	Working Group and relevant staff

- **Communication**

The working group along with Corporate Services will enable ongoing internal communication on the Duty.

Action 2023	Update	Action 2024	Responsible
Regular briefing and discussion in the PPF meetings and the FET Coordinators meeting;	Included in Staff induction and discussed at FET coordinators meeting 2023	Short video and Powtoon to be released as talking points for meetings.	All Staff
Briefing and discussion with learners, including through the FET learner forums;		Presentation at next set of learner meetings in 2024 on PSD	FETSU and FSD working group
Website material on the Duty and the GRETB implementation of the Duty; and Intranet with a PSD SharePoint for the tools, resources and reports developed	SharePoint in draft format, final additions to be made	Launch SharePoint and develop Plain English Webpage for PSD	FSD Working group
Accessibility Audit and Plain English Approach to Website and communications	Accessibility Audit of the website underway to be completed in 2023. Plain English Training completed	Implement actions from the audit of the website. Next stage of Plain English Training delivered. Staff member trained as plain English editor	IT, Communications, OSD, FSD working group and Inclusion

Organisational Culture

- The working group will stimulate and support an engagement across GRETB with the equality and human rights values espoused by the organisation.

Action 2023	Update	Action 2024	Responsible
Promoting staff and learner discussion and feedback on the Equality and Human	Traveller Interagency Framework Training for Middle Managers May 2023. Diversity	Framework for Equality and Diversity alongside a GRETB Equality	Inclusion Unit, FSD Working group

Rights Values Statement.	& Inclusion Training for Staff.	Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2024	
Placing the Statement in prominent places in all workplaces, with a noticeboard for communicating achievements and work on these issues.	Plain English Version of the Duty in draft at present, once complete will be designed and sent to all centres/schools.	FSD Poster to be designed and distributed to all centres / Schools	FSD group
Devising and disseminating a range of materials communicating perspectives and thinking on the values in the Statement and their implications	SharePoint site has some material	Continue to add and update SharePoint	FSD group
Weaving the Statement into curricula so it serves to stimulate dialogue among learners.	Needs further discussion and resourcing	To be explored in 2024	FSD working group
Including the Equality and Human Rights Values Statement in the staff handbook, learners' handbook, and learners' charter.	Included in the learner charter	Ensure it is in all learner handbooks in 2024	FSD and all centres/schools
Having the Equality and Human Rights Values Statement and its content as an item for the agenda of staff meetings, meetings of the SMT, and Board	Explore an approach to this in 2023	Continue to advocate for its inclusion	All

meetings from time to time.			
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6. Reporting on Implementation of the Duty

GRETB will include a report on the work done on and outcomes from implementing the Duty in the Annual Report each year.