



# ENGAGE FOR CHANGE:

A Training Module to  
Support Civil Society  
Engagement with the  
Public Sector Equality  
and Human Rights Duty

**EQUALITY  
& RIGHTS  
ALLIANCE**

November 2018

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, we would like to thank the fifty-eight civil society organisations and groups who participated in our regional workshops during 2018, where the elements of this training module were tested and further developed.

# FOREWORD

Text

## BACKGROUND

Since its inception, the Equality and Rights Alliance has advocated for the introduction of a public sector duty to evolve the current statutory protections in the areas of prohibiting discrimination, promoting equality, and protecting, respecting and fulfilling human rights.

This training module and its companion publication “Engage for Change: Building Civil Society Engagement with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty” build on this body of work to support an effective implementation of the public sector equality and human rights duty.

The training module presented here is based on our work undertaken during 2018 to support civil society engagement with the public sector equality and human rights duty. During 2018, five regional workshops were hosted with local community groups in: Letterkenny, Galway city, Cork city, Ennis, and Wexford. The workshop sessions had the central aim to enable locally based civil society organisations to pursue a collective engagement to drive and support implementation of the public sector duty with the public sector organisations in their geographical areas. The workshops had the further aim to engage civil society in a values-led approach to this task.

This module reflects an amalgamation of the training content delivered for these workshops, and is informed by the participation of those who attended.

## THE FRAMEWORK OF A VALUES-LED APPROACH

Values offer a useful framework to implementing the public sector equality and human rights duty. Values are those ideals that people deem to be important. They motivate people’s choices, attitudes and behaviours. Within organisations, values motivate decision-making, priorities, practices and processes. Specific values can be identified that motivate a concern for equality and human rights.

The core values that underpin and connect the goals of promoting equality, preventing discrimination, and protecting, respecting, and fulfilling human rights provide a basis for the development of an integrated approach to implementing the public sector equality and human rights duty.<sup>(1)</sup> The Equality and Rights Alliance has previously set out a values-led approach that public bodies might take to implementing the public sector duty. The traditions of equality and human rights are based on shared, underpinning values. Five core values are identified by the Equality and Rights Alliance as underpinning and connecting these two traditions and approaches:<sup>(2)</sup>

**Autonomy:** encompassing choice, agency, freedom, self-determination and the absence of coercion.

**Democracy:** encompassing participation, voice, empowerment and accountability from those in positions of power.

**Dignity:** encompassing respect, relationships of care and love, human worth and the absence of inhumane and degrading treatment, harassment and discrimination.

**Inclusion:** encompassing a sense of belonging and community, interdependence, collective responsibility and a valuing of diversity.

**Social Justice:** encompassing redistribution of wealth, income, jobs, and social goods, and the absence of privilege and entitlement.

1. Equality and Rights Alliance (March 2015). A New Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Author: Rachel Mullen.  
2. For more detail on this, see: Equality and Rights Alliance (March 2015). Equality and Human Rights: an Integrated Approach. Author: Niall Crowley.

The core values that underpin and connect the goals of promoting equality, preventing discrimination, and protecting, respecting, and fulfilling human rights, are suggested as a basis for the development of an integrated approach to implementing the public sector equality and human rights duty and the Equality and Rights Alliance has previously set out a suggested approach that public bodies might take in this regard.<sup>(4)</sup>

## OVERALL TRAINING OBJECTIVE:

To support civil society organisations and groups working to address discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights, to pursue a collective engagement with public bodies to ensure an effective implementation of the public sector equality and human rights duty, using a values-based approach.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- be better informed about S42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014: the public sector equality and human rights duty,
- gain an understanding about a values-based approach to addressing equality and human rights concerns,
- gain an understanding of applying a values framework to the implementation of the public sector duty,
- be further enabled to make a contribution to specific steps in the implementation of the duty, and
- be better enabled to collectively engage with public sector bodies to implement the public sector duty. using a values framework.

4. Equality and Rights Alliance (March 2015). A New Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Author: Rachel Mullen.

## SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

### INPUT 1. :

#### The key elements of the public sector equality and human rights duty

##### Aim:

- To introduce participants to the public sector equality and human rights duty: its scope and potential.

#### CORE ELEMENTS OF THE DUTY TO HIGHLIGHT:

##### 1. The provisions of the duty:

- A 'public body' is broadly defined to include: government departments (with the exception of the Department of Defence & Defence Forces), state agencies, state funded public services.
- The requirement on public bodies to: have regard to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality, and protect human rights.

##### 2. The scope of the duty:

- Public bodies must consider the application of the duty in regard to: those groups protected under equality legislation; the rights, liberties, and freedoms conferred on, or guaranteed to people under the Constitution; and the rights, liberties, and freedoms conferred on, or guaranteed to persons by any treaty, convention, or agreement given the force of law in the state,
- Public bodies must consider the application of the duty in regard to its members, staff, service users and policy beneficiaries, and
- The duty applies to all function areas of a public body.

### 3. The obligations placed on public bodies:

- to make an assessment of the human rights and equality issues believed to be relevant to their functions and purpose, to make that assessment accessible to the public, and the policies, plans and actions in place, or proposed to be put in place, to address those issues,
- to report on developments and achievements in regard to the duty.

### 4. The potential of the duty:

- to enhance quality, inclusiveness, accessibility and accountability of public services,
- to drive cultural change in the public service,
- to secure evidence-based approaches in decision-making in relation to equality and human rights,
- to shift responsibility from the individual (to make a complaint of discrimination) to the institution (to take proactive measures not to discriminate in the first instance), and
- to bring a greater breadth of experience, knowledge and perspective, to the design and delivery of services and policy-making.

Additional reading sources on the public sector duty:



Equality and Rights Alliance ( March 2015) “A New Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty”.

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (November 2017)  
“Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and protecting human rights”.

## EXERCISE 1: OUR COMMON CORE VALUES

### Aims:

- To introduce participants to the concept of values,
- To draw attention to the fact that common core values connect the diversity of civil society organisations working to address inequality and human rights concerns.

### Methodology:

1. Invite participants to work individually or in pairs. Ask them to consider the following: Can you identify three core values that motivate the long-term goals of your organisation?
2. Invite participants to write each value on a separate post-it note and to place their post-its on a wall where other participants can see.
3. The facilitator should then arrange the post-its to cluster repeated and similar values together.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- What do you notice when you look at the cluster of values identified? Do you see commonalities? Are there any surprises?
- Was it easy to name your organisation's core values?
- Was there any variance between participants from same organisation?



### CORE IDEAS TO HIGHLIGHT

- The degree of commonality regarding the core values of organisations working to address a diversity of equality and human rights issues,
- The link between the pursuit of common value goals and the potential of collective engagement,
- There is often a challenge for organisations to name and define their core values and to ensure there is a whole-organisational approach to living those core values in all areas of the work.





Provide a list of values to help prompt people's thinking.

If there is a mix of public sector and community organisations participating, it can be useful to highlight common values as a potential basis for linkage.

## SECTION 2.: PURSUING VALUE GOALS WITH PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

### EXERCISE 2: PURSUING VALUE GOALS

#### **Aim:**

- To support participants to make the connection between the core values of their organisations and relevant equality and human rights issues and concerns.

#### **Part 1: Defining Core Values**

#### **Methodology:**

1. Choose three of the core organisation values identified by participants in exercise 1.

*Note: choose values that underpin equality and human rights and that a number of participants have identified.*

2. Divide participants into three groups and assign one of the chosen values to each group. Ask each group to complete worksheet A: defining core values (see appendices).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- Was it easy to agree a shared meaning for the values?
- Were there differences in terms of individual understanding and meaning regarding specific values?



## CORE IDEA TO HIGHLIGHT

- Importance of agreeing a shared understanding of our organisational values.

## TIPS!

- Use the suggested five core equality and human rights values and their corresponding value statements (page 2) as a guide to prompt the group discussions.
- If groups are struggling to agree a value statement ask them to agree some key words and phrases that are core to defining the value.
- With larger groups, more than three values can be the focus for this exercise.

## Part 2: Public Sector Values

### INPUT 2. :

#### Values in the public sector

##### Aims:

- To establish the resonance of a values-based approach to implementing the public sector duty, with the ethos of public sector organisations.
- To highlight the potential of the public sector duty as a catalyst for shaping the culture of public sector organisations, towards a prioritising of equality and human rights,
- To underscore the potential of values as a basis for collective civil society and public sector engagement on the public sector duty.

#### CORE ISSUES TO HIGHLIGHT

- Many public sector organisations have explicit core values that underpin what the organisation stands for and how it seeks to operate. These values often include values that underpin the goals of promoting equality, prohibiting discrimination, and protecting, respecting and fulfilling human rights.
- Public sector duties are essentially about organisational culture change: this requires a focus on public sector values.
- The current prioritisation of certain values across the public sector, such as value-for-money and efficiency, has created an imbalance, whereby other values that have the potential to create an equality and rights-based culture are given less prominence.
- The public sector duty has the potential to re-prioritise and re-balance public sector values, through an enhanced priority focus on equality and human rights values.



- This input could include visuals from a variety of Irish public sector bodies to highlight public sector values that include a focus on equality and human rights values.

## EXERCISE 3.: ASSESSING EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

- **Aim:**

- To identify key equality and human rights issues in relation to specific public sector organisations.

### **Methodology:**

1. Identify a public sector organisation that a number of participants would seek to engage with regarding the implementation of the public sector duty (for illustrative purposes we are using the example of Education and Training Boards).(5)
2. Divide participants into small groups and assign each group one of the three values and corresponding value statement identified in Exercise 2.
3. Invite each group to complete worksheet B. : The role of public bodies in addressing key equality and human rights concerns (see appendices).
5. Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are statutory agencies with responsibility for education and vocational training, youth work and adult and community education. ETBs directly manage a number of second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith national schools and a range of adult and education centres. ETBs also fund community and voluntary organisations throughout Ireland, to provide community and adult education and training. ETBs operate under the remit of SOLAS, an agency of the Department of Education and Skills.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- Are there specific equality or human rights issues identified that some groups are more likely to experience than other groups?
- What issues are commonly experienced across the groups protected under equality legislation and people experiencing inequality on the basis of their socio-economic status?
- Strategically, are there key shared priority issues that offer potential for collective engagement with the Education and Training Board?

Taking the values of: Respect, Inclusion, and Social Justice, below use the example of the types of issues that participants might identify that have relevance for Education and Training Boards:

**Value: SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**Key Issues for ETBs:**

- financial barriers preventing some groups from accessing adult and further education and training.
- educational disadvantage
- impact of homeless crisis on young people and adults who wish to participate in further education and training
- low levels of participation by some groups (lone parents, Roma, Travellers)

**Value: INCLUSION**

**Key Issues for ETBs:**

- inaccessibility of further education and training courses and venues for people with disabilities
- failure to accommodate the diversity of learners and service users
- lack of awareness and understanding among marginalised groups regarding courses and services provided
- curriculum and course content that fails to recognise the diversity of the community
- negative experiences of integrated settings for minority groups

**Value: RESPECT**

**Key Issues for ETBs:**

- Stereotypes of older people in accessing adult and community education
- Minority ethnic groups experiences of racism in accessing and participating in services and programmes.
- The need for systems and processes to address discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment.
- Discrimination experienced by different groups in accessing and participating in publicly funded services and programmes.



## CORE IDEA TO HIGHLIGHT

- An 'assessment of equality and human rights issues' is a central requirement of public bodies regarding their obligations under the duty.
- Commonality of key barriers for a diversity of groups experiencing inequality and discrimination, which offers the potential for a more collective prioritisation of key issues which different public bodies need to address as part of their obligations under the duty.
- Importance of developing a strategic input into the public sector body process of assessing equality and human rights issues that combines comprehensiveness for the groups with capacity to engage with and implement by the public body.



- The exercise is more relevant if participants initially focus on those barriers that are key and that exist for all or most of the groups, on whose behalf they are advocating in their respective organisations.
- Some public bodies have developed Equality and Human Rights Value Statements (6) that could be used as a basis for this exercise. A useful starting point in this regard, are the core values they have set out in these statements to underpin their approach to the public sector duty.

## NEXT STEPS?

## EXERCISE 4. :

### Collectively engaging with the public sector

#### Aim:

- To invite suggestions for opportunities and actions to collectively engage with public bodies on the implementation of the duty.

6. see <http://www.values-lab.ie/learn-more.php> for more information.

**Methodology:**

1. Invite participants to work in small groups to consider the following question:

*In pursuing possible next steps, what actions could civil society organisations consider to collectively engage with public sector bodies on the implementation of the duty? (please consider action across three areas: organising; engaging; and monitoring)*

2. Following feedback from participants, the trainer could usefully sum up with the following suggestions:

**Organising:**

- Network with a view to developing a collective approach to the duty, Supporting the capacity of public bodies to implement a values-based approach to the duty,
- Identify whether local public bodies have established any strategic objectives in regard to implementing the duty,
- Collectively develop a values-led framework with a view to implementing the duty within civil society organisations.

**Engaging:**

- Lobby public bodies to build commitment to and to put in place an equality and human rights values statement and an infrastructure to apply the statement,
- Convene at key moments to submit an assessment of the equality and human rights issues of relevance to a public body (such as when the body is developing its strategic or annual plan; or a key policy, service, or programme).
- Convene at key moments to review and give feedback on the plans, policies, and actions in strategy or action plans to address issues agreed for the assessment.

**Monitoring:**

- Monitor to ensure public bodies are implementing the duty,
- Engage with the IHREC where key public bodies are failing to implement the duty,
- Monitor to ensure the issues identified by civil society are being pursued by the public body as the plan, policy or programme is implemented.

## **WORKSHEET A : Defining Core Values**

As a group, **consider the value you have been assigned:**

1. Brainstorm words/phrases to 'unpack' the meaning of this value in terms of your work to address equality and human rights concerns.

2. Agree a shared meaning for this value.

3. Draft a short value statement setting out your shared meaning for this value.



## **WORKSHEET B : The role of (public body) in addressing key equality and human rights concerns**

1. Consider the following question in regard to the core value (and its corresponding value statement):

For groups that experience inequality, discrimination, and human rights abuses, what are the relevant equality and human rights issues that (public body) needs to address?

Note: focus particularly on systemic issues of relevance to the planning, design and delivery of policies/ programmes / services.

2. Prioritise three to five key equality and human rights issues that you might feedback to the (public body).

**Note: priorities should be agreed on the basis of:**

- Issues identified that have relevance for a number of groups that experience inequality, discrimination and disadvantage;
- Issues that have relevance the strategic objectives of the ETB;
- Issues that are strategic (if they were addressed, there would be greater equality of outcome for a broad number of groups experiencing inequality, discrimination and disadvantage).

## ABOUT THE EQUALITY AND RIGHTS ALLIANCE

Established in August 2008, the Equality and Rights Alliance is a coalition of civil society groups and activists working to strengthen political and popular commitment to an effective and resilient equality and human rights infrastructure in Ireland and to provide strategic leadership in protecting, strengthening and critiquing the equality and human rights infrastructure.

[WWW.ERACAMPAIGN.ORG](http://WWW.ERACAMPAIGN.ORG)