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Longford and Westmeath Education & Training Board

Equality and Human Rights Statement

Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Embedding Equality & Human Rights in our Work in LWETB

1. Introduction

This working draft has been developed by the Longford and Westmeath Education & Training Board (LWETB) Senior Management Team to enable continued consultation across the organisation on this document and agreement on a final version of an Equality and Human Rights Values Statement for LWETB.

The final statement will make explicit the ongoing shared commitment across our organisation to achieving equality and fulfilling human rights. It will:

- be a celebration of, and made possible by, our achievements to date
- reflect our determination to go further on these important goals
- underpin a systematic approach, across all our functions and services, to securing our ongoing contribution to eliminating discrimination, protecting human rights, and achieving equality for staff and learners

This statement reflects our commitment to equality and human rights and to further embedding this focus in our work in LWETB. This is a commitment that shapes the objectives we set for our work and the way we approach our work.

This statement enables us to respond to our obligations under the Irish Human Rights Equality and Commission Act 2014 to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights in carrying out the functions of LWETB.

Our commitment to equality and human rights encompasses the diversity of people that utilise our services or work within the area, hereinafter the 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 carer's), 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

2. Values in line with the value statement of LWETB

The Strategy Statement document sets out the Mission, Vision and Values for LWETB and identifies key strategic priorities for delivery over the lifetime of the strategy. The LWETB Strategy Statement is guided by national policy and grounded in the current socio-economic and educational reality for people living in Longford and Westmeath.

A set of three core shared values motivates our concern for equality and human rights. They reflect our ambition to work towards the achievement of full equality in practice, the elimination of discrimination, and the fulfilment of human rights. These are:

- Respect
- Empowerment
- Inclusion

3. Values, Objectives and Processes

In making our equality and human rights values explicit, we define each of them, identify a shared objective as an organisation for each one, and establish an approach we will take to our work that reflects each one.

A. Respect

Respect is about relationships of mutual regard that are non-judgemental, welcoming and empathetic. It involves treating people equally, with fairness and kindness, and embracing the diversity among staff colleagues and learners.

Statement of Objective:

LWETB seeks to treat everyone in a respectful and fair manner that understands and recognises diversity.

Statement of Process:

We cultivate an environment in the organisation of mutual regard that embraces the diversity of staff, learners and the general public we are in contact with.

B. Empowerment

Empowerment is about self-determination and choice. It involves listening and hearing the voice of all learners, staff, stakeholders and the general public we are in contact with, in particular those people from groups experiencing inequality. It includes participation in decision making, and processes that are innovative as a result, and requires enabling this voice with information sharing and skills development.

Statement of Objective:

LWETB seeks to hear the voice of, respect the choices of, and enable the voice and choices of its members (learners, staff and stakeholders), in particular those who are under-represented.

Statement of Process:

We engage in processes of dialogue, consultation, and feedback with our members, we are learner centred in our provision, and we support learners to take responsibility for their own choices and learning.

C. Inclusion

Inclusion is about securing access, participation and outcomes for staff and learners, in particular those from groups experiencing inequality. It involves positive action, flexibility in accommodating diversity, and ongoing learning as an organisation.

Statement of Objective:

LWETB seeks to ensure staff and learners, in particular from groups experiencing inequality, achieve access, participation and outcomes, by removing barriers and taking positive action. Language barriers is one example of this, where those whose first language is not English or Irish and may face additional challenges in accessing services.

Statement of Process:

We facilitate all learners and staff, in particular those from groups experiencing inequality, through promoting awareness of diversity, flexibility of delivery to accommodate diversity, and provision of supports to promote inclusion and enable their access, participation and outcomes.

4. Using our Equality and Human Rights Statement

We will:

- Communicate this statement to staff, learners, and stakeholders including LWETB Board, Committee's and Board of Managements
- Communicate this statement on our website, in our publications and in organisational policies
- Create opportunities for staff, learners and stakeholders to engage with this statement and the values it sets out
- Have an agenda item relating to this statement and its implementation for staff meetings
- Include a focus on this statement in induction and training for staff and learners
- Use this statement as a template to inform our planning and ensure a focus on our equality and human rights values in planning
- Promote this approach to embedding equality and human rights, in our work through the whole organization

5. Review and Implementation

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team in line with best practice, or in light of changes in legislation and guidance from sources such as Internal Audit, C&AG, the Department of Education and the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. The date of implementation is the date of Chief Executive approval.