



Promoting Equality in the Irish Hospitality Sector

10 Steps to Equality and Diversity for the Irish Hospitality Sector

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THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN ÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

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The Equality Mainstreaming Unit (EMU) has been established with funding from the European Social Fund, through the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, and from the Equality Authority.

The objective of the Unit is to contribute to addressing labour market gaps for specific groups that are experiencing barriers to participation and employment, including those created by gender inequality and wider inequalities.

The Equality Mainstreaming Unit has provided support to the Irish Hospitality Institute for a project to assist hotels in incorporating equality considerations into employment practice and customer service.

In 2007, the Irish Hospitality Institute, in conjunction with the Equality Authority, launched an initiative aimed at supporting the integration of equality and diversity into employment and customer service in the hospitality sector and ultimately, setting a road map for a sectoral approach to equality and diversity. In adopting a sectoral approach to equality, this project represents the first undertaking of its kind in Ireland, putting the Irish hospitality sector at the forefront in placing equality and diversity at the top of the business agenda.

This leaflet outlines 10 steps that businesses can take to promote equality and diversity in their organisations. You may decide, depending on what your organisation has already in place, to focus on some steps rather than on others. The main thing is to get started!

- 1 Develop Awareness and Knowledge of Equality and Diversity Issues
- 2 Develop a Systematic Approach to Equality and Diversity in Your Organisation
- 3 Create an Organisational Culture based on Equality and Diversity
- 4 Provide Leadership From the Top
- 5 Designate Responsibility
- 6 Develop an Equality-Friendly Recruitment Process
- 7 Promote Equality Through Staff Development and Training
- 8 Develop and Provide Equality-Friendly Services
- 9 Develop a Collaborative Approach
- 10 What Gets Measured Gets Done - Monitoring and Evaluation



1 Develop Awareness and Knowledge of Equality and Diversity Issues

It is very important to raise awareness and understanding of equality and diversity within your organisation.

You can do this by:

- > Hosting information sessions on equality and diversity for your staff;
- > Providing equality and diversity training at all levels for managers and employees;
- > Engaging in networking on equality issues at regional, national and international level;
- > Organising special awareness days / weeks on various equality themes such as work-life balance.

2 Develop a Systematic Approach to Equality and Diversity in Your Organisation

You can achieve a positive business impact if you develop a planned and systematic approach to equality and diversity.

This will involve:

- > Developing an Employment Equality Policy for your employees and a related action plan;
- > Developing an Equal Status Policy to promote equality for your customers, and a related action plan;
- > Ensuring that resources are made available to support and enable actions identified in the Action Plan(s);
- > Setting up an Equality and Diversity Committee to oversee action on equality and diversity;
- > Designating Equality Officer(s) with support and resources to drive forward action on equality;
- > Supporting frontline managers and supervisors in addressing equality and diversity issues on the ground;
- > Supporting and encouraging people of diverse backgrounds to work together in promoting integration in the workplace, through practical initiatives e.g. rostering arrangements, buddy systems, mentoring etc.

3 Create an Organisational Culture Based on Equality and Diversity

Organisations need to make the strategic link with the business case for equality and diversity and to incorporate it in business planning and objectives.



Examples of actions in this regard are:

- > Incorporate equality and diversity into the vision and mission statement of the organisation and other policy documents;
- > Schedule discussions on equality and diversity issues at management meetings related to finance, marketing, HR, customer services etc.;
- > Ensure that all employees are aware of the organisation's equality policy and the implications for their individual roles;
- > Incorporate equality and diversity into existing procedures e.g. supervision, appraisal, performance management etc.;
- > Provide equality and diversity management training, including for front line managers.

4 Provide Leadership From the Top

Top management support and leadership is vital in order to achieve this organisational change and to realise the potential business benefits of embracing equality and diversity as part of a planned and systematic approach.

Examples of actions in this regard are:

- > General Managers should play a role in promoting the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity within the organisation and externally;
- > Identify, target and support equality leaders or champions committed to equality and diversity to promote, drive and lead the initiative;
- > Allocate time for department representatives to attend meetings e.g. Equality and Diversity Committee meetings;
- > Ensure that top management support is visible throughout the organisation.

5 Designate Responsibility

The organisation should assign responsibility for equality to designated staff members. The organisation may decide to allocate the employment equality role to a staff member of the HR function and the equality in customer service role to a member of the Customer Service section. The Equality Officers must be supported by top management and, if possible, by an Equality Committee.

Examples of actions in this regard are:

- > Designate Equality Officer(s) and/or Equality Committee;
- > Allocate resources and provide support in order for the Equality Officer and/or Equality Committee to act efficiently and effectively;
- > Designate the staff members responsible for ensuring that the targets and objectives of the Equality Action Plans are achieved.



6 Develop an Equality-Friendly Recruitment Process

Organisations need to ensure that their recruitment and selection practices are based on clear, objective criteria and do not incorporate any bias which would exclude certain individuals at this early stage in the employment process. Furthermore, organisations need to go beyond this and encourage a more diverse candidate base for positions.

Examples of actions in this regard are:


- > Communicate to potential candidates the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity and openness to employees from all backgrounds;
- > Promote the organisation as an equal opportunities employer;
- > Review recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that they do not discriminate against any potential candidate either directly or indirectly;
- > Target and encourage applications from people across the nine equality grounds (gender, race, religion, age, marital and family status, sexual orientation, disability and membership of the Traveller Community);
- > Ensure that recruitment and selection procedures and decisions are based on clear, objective criteria;
- > Ensure that there is an equality policy covering recruitment and selection procedures;
- > Provide specialised equality and diversity training for those involved in the recruitment and selection process;
- > Monitor and review the outcomes of each stage.

7 Promote Equality Through Staff Development and Training

Training and development has a critical role to play in developing and supporting a commitment to equality and diversity in the organisation. Staff members may have had limited contact with people from diverse backgrounds and it is only through awareness raising, training and experience that they have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of the issues and engage with and commit to equality and diversity.

Examples of actions in this regard are:

- > Provide an input on the organisation's equality and diversity policies in induction and orientation sessions;
- > Encourage employees to connect with the equality related issues at a personal level, through active engagement and experience e.g. working with people with disabilities as part of a team;
- > Empower and prepare employees to know how to deal with diverse customers and handle the situations of conflict which may arise as a result of this diversity;
- > Organise refresher training workshops for management and employees on equality and diversity, including reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities;

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- > Provide reasonable accommodation arrangements for staff with disabilities;
 - > Consider a Train the Trainer approach which can be useful in the hospitality sector, in light of the time constraints on releasing employees for training.

8 Develop and Provide Equality-Friendly Services

Equality and diversity initiatives need to focus on issues of service design and provision, extending beyond an employment and Human Resources focus to involve the organisation as a whole.

Examples of actions in this regard are:

- > Ensure that employees have the necessary training to respond to the diversity of your customer base;
- > Audit existing provision to see how you can make reasonable accommodation for staff and customers with disabilities and to identify and remove barriers (physical and service-related) to quality service provision for people with disabilities throughout your organisation;
- > Develop and provide specially designed services which are appropriate to meet the needs of specific groups e.g. older people, people with disabilities;
- > Make adjustments to your premises – install ramps, provide hearing loop systems, develop clearer signage etc.;
- > Provide for special dietary requirements - medical (e.g. diabetic, coeliac/gluten free), cultural and religious (Kosher, meal availability during Ramadan);
- > Communicate with employees and customers the availability of special services e.g. hearing loop system, ramps, special diets etc.;
- > Use a diverse workforce to cater to a diverse customer base e.g. have employees liaise with customers of the same nationality/language;
- > Raise awareness about accessibility issues with subcontractors and maintenance teams.

9 Develop a Collaborative Approach

The involvement and engagement of employees at all levels of the organisation is necessary, focusing on attitude change and awareness, in order to ensure that equality permeates the workplace culture.

Externally, networking within the sector, sharing experiences and learning from one another can be very beneficial. Furthermore, organisations should consult with relevant support bodies, associations and groups in order to ensure a partnership approach.

Specific actions include:

- > Actively involve employees in equality and diversity initiatives;

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- > Encourage employees to give their feedback and reward ideas regarding service improvement and equality;
 - > Establish links with other organisations committed to developing and implementing equality and diversity initiatives;
 - > Participate in sectoral initiatives which provide opportunities for learning, networking and training opportunities offered by the IHI;
 - > Consult with local organisations, support bodies and associations that represent people under the nine grounds in order to get feedback on their experience of your services;
 - > Get involved in various awards and certification programmes which incorporate equality and diversity principles e.g. FÁS Excellence Through People, IHI Diversity Awards, benchmarking initiatives;
 - > Participate in national and international equality campaigns, e.g. Say No to Ageism Week.

10 What Gets Measured Gets Done - Monitoring and Evaluation

The process of measuring, monitoring and evaluating is very important to ensure that the actions undertaken are achieving a positive result. Monitoring also establishes whether the targets and objectives set out in the Equality Action Plans in relation to employment or service provision are being achieved.

Examples of actions in this regard are:

- > Communicate with people the need and purpose of gathering information and data in relation to equality;
- > Collect feedback through confidential surveys, online surveys and customer suggestion cards that include equality related issues;
- > Include equality in customer complaint systems and collect feedback;
- > Monitor employment patterns including:
 - > Workforce data
 - > Employee turnover
- > Use of harassment/grievance procedures;
- > Promote an equality review/ audit in relation to employment and/or customer services.

In conclusion...

In order to get started, the key is finding simple things that work, doing them well and doing them often. While larger organisations have greater resources and support structures on which to draw, it is also possible for smaller organisations to implement equality and diversity policies and practices. Initiatives need not be overly costly or resource intensive and the return on investment is worthwhile.

Training and Consultancy

SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) Framework

The European Social Fund provides funding, through the Equality Authority's Equality Mainstreaming Unit for an equality support scheme for SMEs. The scheme offers up to five days free consultancy support on employment equality and/or customer service.

Work-Life Balance Scheme

The National Framework Committee for Work-Life Balance Policies offers a free consultancy support scheme to SMEs to enable them to develop and implement work-life balance arrangements that are suitable for the needs of their businesses and employees and that improve productivity, retain skilled personnel and create a positive working environment.

Details of both schemes are available from the Equality Authority at www.equality.ie or at info@equality.ie

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