Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

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Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

1. Introduction

Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB), as a public body, is required to provide an assessment of the Equality and Human Rights issues, relevant to its functions, for the identified groups under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ('The Duty'). The purpose of the assessment is to inform our on-going work to implement the Duty.

This is NOT an assessment of the performance of MSLETB in regard to its work to address Equality and Human Rights concerns. Instead, it is a foundation stone for identifying the Equality and Human Rights issues facing the identified groups under the Duty, in particular, those Equality and Human Rights issues that have relevance for the functions of MSLETB.

The functions of MSLETB are to provide secondary level education, Further Education and Training ('FET') including apprenticeships; youth work services, community-based education programmes; outdoor education; outreach programmes, specialist programmes, e.g. through Music Generation, School Completion Programmes and other programmes or courses as maybe delivered, funded or sponsored in whole or in co-operation with other bodies or agencies.

This assessment of Equality and Human Rights issues is set out in two parts: Part One (section 2) is a summary of the equality and human rights issues relevant to our core functions. In this section our core values of Respect, Inclusion, Social Justice, and Empowerment are used as a framework to set out the Equality and Human Rights issues identified. Part Two of the assessment is the evidence base from which the Equality and Human Rights issues are drawn. This evidence base is set out in a separate report: "MSLETB Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues".

2 Part One: Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

The Equality and Human Rights issues identified below relate to all of the identified groups for the Duty, unless otherwise indicated. In some instances, specific mention is noted for one or more of the identified groups, where the available data indicate: a unique experience for that group in regard to the issue(s); or that the group(s) experience a significant /persistent inequality/discrimination/human rights violations in regard to the issue(s).

Respect

Respect is about mutual empathy, understanding, listening, integrity, and kindness. It involves meeting people where they are at, being non-judgemental, and parity of esteem.

The Equality and Human Rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, relevant to this value are:

- Employment-related discrimination for all of the identified groups (when seeking work and/or in-work discrimination). In particular, the data points to:

  - high levels of discrimination, when seeking employment, for: Travellers and other minority ethnic groups, disabled people, and transgender people,
  - high levels of in-work discrimination for: minority ethnic groups, women, disabled people, and transgender people.

- Discrimination when trying to access and/or participate in key services, including education and training. In particular, the data points to:

  - high levels of discrimination experienced by Travellers in accessing and participating in education.

- Identity-based harassment and sexual harassment, which prevents access to and participation in employment and key services, including education. In particular, the data points to:

  - high levels of sexual harassment experienced by women in the workplace,
  - high levels of identity-based harassment and bullying (including in education settings and workplace settings) experienced by LGBTI people, Travellers and other minority ethnic groups.

- Stereotypes and biases that result in negative treatment / identify-based harassment and abuse, which diminishes the employment and education chances and outcomes for the identified groups, including in particular:

  - oppressive notions in relation to superior and inferior cultures, resulting in negative treatment for minority ethnic groups;
  - sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and ageism: at the individual and institutional levels.

- The impact of identity-based harassment/abuse and sexual harassment on victims which can diminish their employment and education outcomes: negative impact on their mental and physical health; negative impact on their confidence and performance in work/education; victims of such incidents missing or leaving education/employment as a result of the abuse; domestic violence can have a very negative impact on women's full participation in employment and education.

- Perceived and/or actual lack of knowledge, understanding and/or capacity of employers and service providers to effectively prevent and address issues of discrimination, identity-based harassment and sexual harassment for employees and service users.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about recognising, understanding, valuing and adapting for diversity. It involves accessibility, belonging, being person-centred, and innovating to enrich the learning and working environment for the identified groups.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, relevant to this value are:

- Failure, by employers and service providers, to make adaptations for diversity in order to address the specific needs arising from this diversity. In particular the data points to:

  - inflexibility in the design and delivery of services, programmes, and supports;
  - limited capacity and knowledge (among employers and service providers) to understand and respond to the practical implications of diversity for disabled people, and people with a minority ethnic identity;
  - insufficient attention to addressing the diversity of needs of those at risk of early school leaving;
  - inadequate understanding and consideration of issues of intersectionality which can give rise to experiences of multiple and compounding discrimination and inequalities for identified groups.

- Invisibility of diversity and a lack of equality data (regarding employment and service provision) to measure diversity and monitor progress in regard to equality outcomes for specific groups.

- Issues of isolation and social exclusion for particular groups, which can negatively impact on their access to employment and education. In particular the data points to:

  - people with 'hidden' disabilities, Travellers, and LGBTI+ people feeling compelled to hide their identity (in employment and education settings) due to fear of negative treatment, which increases their isolation;
  - migrants, particularly those whose first language is not English, and people living in direct provision, isolated from services and supports; and
  - barriers to social inclusion for older people (particularly those living alone and/or in rural areas), disabled people, and people living in poverty.

- Hate crimes and hate speech against minority ethnic groups and LGBTI+ people (in public spaces, on social media), and a significant underreporting of racist incidents, to the Gardaí.

Social Justice

Social Justice is about transparency, fairness, and equal opportunities 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 this value are:

- Low educational outcomes for a number of the identified groups. In particular the data points to:

  - early school leaving, as a result of barriers such as identity-based harassment/abuse, for Travellers and LGBTI students;
  - barriers to accessing further and higher education courses, for migrants with insecure immigration status;
  - poor educational outcomes for Travellers, and people with a disability (in particular those with intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, and speech impediments).

- Barriers to participation in lifelong learning for a number of the identified groups, due to issues such as digital exclusion (older people and people living in poverty); costs associated with participating in education (people living in/at risk of poverty); access to and affordability of childcare (women, particularly lone parents); language barriers (people whose first language is not English); lack of accommodations for people with different types of disability; and regulatory barriers to accessing state-funded services (some migrants).

- Unemployment and under-employment of some identified groups. In particular, the data points to:

  - low levels of labour market participation for: young people; people with disabilities; Travellers and other minority ethnic groups; and lone parents;

  - lack of employment and training-related networks and connections for Travellers, to aid their progressing into employment and further education and training;

  - barriers to accessing employment for migrants with insecure immigration status; and

  - under-employment of women and higher concentration of women in part-time and precarious work, due to caring responsibilities.

- Lack of access to promotion and career opportunities. In particular the data points to:

  - higher rates of in-work promotion-related discrimination for women and older people; and
  - impact of caring responsibilities and limits on promotion and other career opportunities, for women.

- Low income for many of the identified groups. In particular the data points to:

  - women, in particular lone parents, and minority ethnic groups more likely be in part-time/ lower paid/ precarious work;
  - the gender pension gap; and
  - dependence on social protection supports to access/continue in education and employment (for people who are unemployed, disabled people, lone parents).

- Barriers to accessing employment and education for people who rely on public transport, in particular, people in areas that are inadequately served by public transport;

- Poverty. In particular the data points to:

  - intersection of socio-economic disadvantage with identity-based inequality and discrimination (in particular for: lone parents, Travellers, minority ethnic groups, disabled people, older people, young people with lower socio-economic status, and transgender people);
  - the prohibitive cost of accessing and participating in FET for people living in/at risk of poverty;
  - the lack of entitlement to FET allowance for migrants awaiting a decision on their immigration status;
  - specific experience and situation of young people living in or having left the care system; and
  - digital exclusion/inequality (including lack of access to devices or internet services) for: people living in poverty, people living in overcrowded accommodation (Travellers); and older people.

- Homelessness and insecure accommodation status. In particular the data points to:

  - higher risk of experiencing disadvantage across multiple housing dimensions (discrimination in accessing accommodation, quality of accommodation (including for example over-crowding), and risk of becoming homeless, for: Travellers and other minority ethnic groups; people with disabilities; and lone parents; and
  - unsuitability of direct provision accommodation for families, and lack of accommodation options for those exiting direct provision.

- Unequal health status for some groups, which impacts negatively on their employment and education outcomes. In particular the data points to:

    - high incidence of mental health issues among young people, young Travellers, and LGBTI youth, and mental health difficulties cited as a common root cause of disengagement from education;

    - the negative impact of identity-based harassment on the mental health and wellbeing of victims;

    - high levels of self-harm among LGBTI+ people;

    - very high suicide rates in the Traveller community, in particular among young Travellers; and

    - the negative health impact, on children and adults, of living in the direct provision system.

Empowerment

Empowerment is about voice, choice, autonomy, self-determination and involvement in decisions that affect you. It involves ensuring people have the tools they need to act independently and make choices to positively influence their lives.

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, related to this value are:

- Stereotypes and biases that undermine the capacity of identified groups and negatively impact on their employment and educational opportunities and outcomes, including in particular:

  - gender stereotyping of women in relation to: caring roles and capacities; employer assumptions about the availability and/or commitment of women of childbearing age/ with children; and bias in the evaluation of performance and career progression of women, which impact negatively in regard to employment outcomes;
  - stereotyping in relation to the capabilities of disabled people and older people;
  - stereotypes about the ambition and capability of Travellers, resulting in low expectations of Traveller students.

- Lack of spaces and opportunities for the diversity of voices, of identified groups, to be effectively articulated. In particular the data points to:

  - failure by service providers and employers to ensure the perspective and lived experience of people experiencing inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion is informing priorities and approaches in employment and service provision;
  - service providers lacking awareness of and/or failing to build connections with local advocacy groups to increase access to and participation in FET by the identified groups; and
  - under-representation of people from the identified groups in decision-making positions and in structures to shape and make decisions.

- Digital exclusion which limits people's agency. In particular the data point to:

  - High levels of digital exclusion for: older people; disabled people; and young people who are classified as 'neither in employment nor education'.

- Limited articulation of individual perspectives and preferences by members of the identified groups. In particular the data points to:

  - low levels of confidence in making choices and accessing options available, and in exercising rights due to, for example, the impact of discrimination and social exclusion; internalised oppression, shame and stigma;
  - barriers to communicating with service providers and support services that require online communication, for: people with literacy issues; people who experience digital exclusion; people whose first language is not English;
  - problematic application of a 'medical model' lens to disability (rather than a social model lens) resulting in a disempowering of people with disabilities, and failing to centre disabled people as the experts in regard to their situation and needs;
  - being unable to articulate issues and needs due to having to hide one's identity (Travellers, LGBTI people, and people with hidden disabilities); and
  - lack of information, and barriers to accessing information on options available and to ensure choices are informed.

- Significant under-reporting of discrimination (in employment and/or service provision) and sexual harassment in the workplace.