



YMCA Ireland

YMCA IRELAND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. Policy Statement

The YMCA is a worldwide, Christian movement with a hundred and seventy year history. As part of this movement YMCA Ireland adopts its foundational documents, the Paris Basis and Kampala Principles¹. Responding to its own situation, the YMCA Movement in Ireland has itself adopted foundational statements at key points in its development, including the Anti-Sectarian statement and Cross-Denominational Statement. Together these documents provide a backdrop to YMCA Ireland's approach to all its work.

The YMCA Ireland Christian Emphasis policy and accompanying set of guidelines attempt to translate the term "*extension of His kingdom*" (Paris Basis) into a language, which is accessible and understood by those who make up the organisation today. They seek to set out a set of practical principles and guidelines, which will assist in applying the Christian Emphasis policy to practice.

The following are the key elements of YMCA Ireland's Christian Emphasis policy:

1. The YMCA is committed to a Christian social action model, which attempts to show Christ's love in practical ways to young people and others in need in our local communities.
2. The YMCA is committed to building a community of Christians that celebrates the diversity of Christian experience among its volunteers and staff.
3. The YMCA seeks to apply Christian values to all aspects of its work.
4. The YMCA sees the Christian faith as a personal journey, which takes place within the context of a wider faith community.

From this context the YMCA recognises the need for and supports wholeheartedly a policy

¹ Copies of the Paris Basis and the Kampala Principles can be obtained from the YMCA Ireland Resource site

of equal opportunity, inclusion and diversity in all areas of its work and responsibilities.

In addition, the YMCA Anti-Sectarianism Policy of 1993 commits the organisation particularly to equality of opportunity for all sections of the community across the religious/political/cultural divisions in Ireland.

No condition or requirement will be applied to any applicant for employment or any staff member in the course of his/her employment which is, or may be, unlawfully, unfairly or unreasonably to their disadvantage on the grounds of religious or political belief, race, gender², marital status, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnic origins, or age or be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be justified within the aims and purposes of the YMCA.

Entry to employment and promotion or change of post within the YMCA is determined by personal merit and ability relevant to the aims and purposes of the YMCA.

The aims and purposes of the YMCA commit the Movement to further the work of Christ in the world. As an ecumenical Christian Movement certain posts are deemed as being central or core to ensuring that the Christian emphasis is reflected in practice. These posts are referred to as Strategic Management Posts (SMPs). (Christian Emphasis policy page 5) Within each Strategic Management Post the 'essential nature of the job' (Northern Ireland legislation) pertaining to Christian faith commitment will be outlined in the job description.

If a member of staff believes that he/she has been discriminated against it is his/her responsibility to report the matter to his/her immediate line manager or to the most appropriate person in authority. All allegations of discrimination will be treated seriously by the YMCA.

Sexual, racial and sectarian harassment, disability or ageism are forms of discrimination on the grounds of a person's gender, sexual orientation, race or political/religious beliefs, disability and age.

Such harassment is totally unacceptable to the YMCA and any such behaviour is considered to be a disciplinary offence. All allegations of sexual, racial and sectarian harassment, disability or ageism are treated seriously and all reasonable practicable steps will be taken to prevent the behaviour continuing.

All employees are required to comply with the YMCA policy of not permitting the display of flags, emblems, posters, graffiti etc. or the circulation of literature, which is likely to give offence or cause apprehension among particular groups of employees.

² Gender includes gender reassignment

2. Policy context

Combined with legislation there are a number of key policy documents that also underpin the delivery of services across Ireland and provide a mandate for delivering a service based on the principles of Equality and Inclusion.

In N Ireland these include:

- Children and Young People's Strategy - 2019-2029
- Priorities for Youth
- Department of Education Priorities: One of the key priorities for the Department of Education NI in the delivery of education across the formal and non-formal sectors is '**Reducing the Gap – Removing Barriers to Access**'. with intended outcomes under this priority including:
 - Commitment to promoting equality of opportunity
 - Targeted provision for disadvantages or marginalised young people
 - Responsive and coordinated service
 - Outreach provision
- The Department of Education (NI) has a policy for delivering Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) across education.
The CRED policy aims to:
“...develop self-respect and respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination...”
It also seeks to provide opportunities for participants to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions.

Further Department policies include,

- Department of Social Development 'Volunteer Strategy' and the
- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister 'Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy'.

In Republic of Ireland, the policy context includes:

- Youth Work Act (2001): The Youth Work Act governs all Youth Work in Ireland and commits youth services to meet the needs of all young people equally and fairly.
- National Youth Work Development Plan : This plan commits to uphold the Equal Status Act which places obligations on youth services to deliver services in an equal and non-discriminatory way. In its key points in relation to equality and inclusiveness it states:

“Proposals for a National Youth Work Development Plan are based on a

commitment to a vision of youth work which values diversity, aims to eradicate injustice and inequality, and strives for openness and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults.”

- Quality Standards in Youth Work (NQSF and SLVYG): The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) and the Standards for Local Voluntary Youth Groups (SLVYG) are mechanisms by which all youth groups and organisations will assess their youth work practice with the aim of developing and achieving better practice in all youth work settings. A core principle under which youth groups will measure themselves is that equality and inclusiveness are ensured and all young people are welcomed, valued and involved.

3. Equality Legislation and Definitions

This policy takes into consideration the following Equality legislation pertinent to Northern Ireland:

Section 75 (a) – (in relation to Youth Work)

Section 75(a) of the NI Act (1998) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need for promoting equality of opportunity across nine equality grounds;

- age,
- racial group,
- marital status
- sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons of different religious belief,
- between persons of different political opinion,
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Other relevant equality legislation in the North, which protects young people and adults through the provision of education and services, includes:

- Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 (as amended)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)
- Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (as amended)
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended)
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006 (as amended)

- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (as amended)

Republic of Ireland

- Employment Equality Act – 1998
- Equal Status Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2004) – (in relation to Youth Work)

The Equal Status Act 2000 and Equality Act 2004 prohibit services from discriminating and harassment on nine grounds. ‘Services’ includes all youth services, whether they are run by volunteers or paid staff or whether fees are paid by participants or not.

The nine grounds are:

- a. Age
- b. Gender
- c. Religion
- d. Disability
- e. Family Status
- f. Sexual Orientation
- g. Civil / Marital Status
- h. Membership of the Traveller community
- i. Race(Ethnicity, Skin Colour or National Origin)

As well as the policy and legislative context, the definitions outlined in Appendix 1 are also recognised by the National Executive and reflect the context of this policy

4. Guiding Principles and core values

The following principles and values form the basis from which this policy has been developed and is implemented within YMCA.

Equality: YMCA Ireland believes that **everybody** is of equal value and deserves equal respect, dignity and opportunity. We believe that Equality is based on the following four key objectives:

1. Access to services
2. Inclusion in decision making and shaping one’s own community
3. Relationships based on love, care, respect and solidarity, and
4. Acknowledgement of diversity and the right to social status

Inclusion: Within YMCA Ireland Inclusion is understood as identifying, understanding and removing barriers that exist to ensure participation and belonging of all our staff and participants. This involves:

- Openness and dialogue
- A willingness to change
- A commitment to equality

Equity: Equity, similar to inclusion, ensures that all staff and participants deserve equality of outcome regardless of background. It is about making sure that staff and participants are not directly or indirectly excluded and that positive steps are taken to include those who might otherwise feel excluded.

Diversity: Within YMCA Ireland Diversity encourages respect for and expression of the range of identities represented by all the participants involved in YMCA Programmes and services and those who work with them.

5. Statement of YMCA Ireland's commitment to Equality and Inclusion

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the National Executive and senior management team to the promotion of equality and diversity in YMCA Ireland.

It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, taking into consideration our obligations under the legislation outlined and to provide equality of access and engagement within our services and programmes.

We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- Complying with our own equality and diversity policy, as well as associated policies
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- Regarding all breaches of equal opportunities policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

6. Responsibilities and Implementation

The Training and Policy Officer has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each line manager and supervisor also has responsibilities and we expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants and relevant others (such as contract or agency workers)
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equality and diversity policy.
- Provide equality training and guidance as appropriate, including training on induction and management courses.
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques
- Incorporate equality, inclusion and diversity opportunity notices into general communications practices (eg, staff newsletters, intranet, publications and programme recruitment materials)
- Obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our workforce
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

7. Summary

YMCA Ireland is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All job applicants, employees and others who work for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds.

Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit, whether it be for staff or programme participants, will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

We recognise that the provision of equality and diversity within all aspects of YMCA, is core to our ethos and value base. Our equality and diversity policy will help all those who work for us or who participate in our services and programmes, to develop their full potential.

It is the responsibility of every individual within the YMCA, whether staff, management or participants to eliminate discrimination and to ensure the practical application of this policy.

8. Monitoring and review

The provision of equality of opportunity between women and men, irrespective of ethnic background or disability, will be monitored through the collection and analyses of statistical data on the community background, ethnic background, sex, marital status, family status and status as a disabled person of all full-time and part-time employees and job applicants. We will also monitor our workforce composition and undertake periodic reviews as required by Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

Progress on the implementation of this policy and any equal opportunities and affirmative/positive action programmes will be reviewed annually in consultation with the recognised trade unions/employee representatives and staff representatives. We will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of our equality and diversity policy. This will be monitored by the Personnel and Training standing committee.

YMCA Ireland's Complaints procedure is outlined in Appendix 2

Date approved:

Signature:

Date of next review: June 2023

Appendix 1

Equality Definitions

Discrimination

Discrimination is treating a person less favourably than another person. It includes making distinctions between people and denying them opportunities on the grounds of issues other than ability or qualifications; for example their gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, disability, family circumstances etc.

Under Equality Legislation there are 3 kinds of discrimination:

1. **Direct** (e.g. refusing someone a service, being hostile to an individual because of an aspect of their identity). Direct discrimination occurs when a person receives less favourable treatment, or a less favourable outcome, than another person in the same situation would have received on the grounds of their identity under the nine grounds.
2. **Indirect** (e.g. creating barriers to an individual's participation in a programme or service). Indirect discrimination occurs when a seemingly neutral policy or requirement actually has an adverse impact on a person from a minority background. Indirect discrimination can be unintentional. It can happen when services fail to take into consideration that different groups of people have different needs. Treating people with different needs the same can have the effect of being an indirect form of discrimination. For example, failing to provide for the mobility needs, such as providing wheelchair ramps, for people who are wheelchair users is a form of indirect discrimination that is fundamentally inequitable as it clearly denies access to those people.
3. **By Association** – a person is discriminated against not because of their identity or status but because of their association with someone else (e.g. treating someone unfavourably because they are a family member or friend of a gay person, member of the Traveller community, person with a disability etc).

N.B. In Northern Ireland, this would be known in equality legislation as 'Victimisation'

Harassment

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating a hostile, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Harassment, including sexual harassment, on any of the nine grounds is prohibited. This prohibition applies to all aspects of YMCA Ireland's service and programmes, The National Executive will not permit any person or participant to be harassed or to be sexually harassed because of their identity or status linked to the nine grounds. YMCA Ireland also recognises that harassment applies to both the actions of workers and of

participants.

Positive Action (Affirmative Action)

Positive action occurs when measures are taken to correct an unequal state of affairs, for example where equality of outcome has been verifiably absent because of discrimination in the past. Examples would be where previously under-represented groups (such as women) are deliberately targeted.

Under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 Public Authorities are ‘bound’ to have regard to the need for affirmative action (positive action) when considering their duty under the clause.

Appendix 2

Complaints

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures. A copy of these procedures is available from the line manager. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

These internal procedures do not replace or detract from the right of the employees to pursue complaints under the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to an industrial tribunal or, under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, to a Fair Employment Tribunal. Every effort will be made to ensure that employees making complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.