Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Assessment and Action Plan

Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment

2025-2028

Prepared by the Department of
Climate, Energy and the Environment
gov.ie

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1 Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

1.1 Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ('the Duty') is set out in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. It places a statutory obligation on public bodies to have regard to human rights and equality considerations in the performance of their functions.

Section 42(1) of the IHREC Act states that a public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—

(a) eliminate discrimination,

(b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons

to whom it provides services, and

(c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom

it provides services.

Section 42(2) provides that the public body shall set out an assessment of human rights and equality issues it believes relevant to the functions and purpose of the body; and the actions to address those issues; and to report to the public on developments and achievements in a manner accessible to the public.

Operational Standards are established or agreed methods or approaches that organisations routinely follow to reduce discrimination and promote human rights and equality in the workplace and when providing services to the public. These could involve, but are not limited to:

- designing and implementing processes to ensure an organisation complies with the Duty
- undertaking equality and human rights impact assessments before adopting a policy, plan or strategy

- maintaining all necessary records to demonstrate the organisation is complying with the Duty

Our Department is committed to ensuring that there is a culture of respect for human rights and equality among our staff and for the communities we serve. This document provides an assessment of the human rights and equality issues related to our Department's functions as policy maker, employer and service provider, and the actions to address these issues. More information can be found on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights duty page on our website at this link: Human Rights and Equality

1.2 Statement of Strategy

Our Department's Statement of Strategy, entitled Le Chéile 28, sets out the vision, mission, values and five strategic goals which will guide the strategic direction of the Department for the period 2025 - 2028.

Our Department's vision is of *"a climate neutral Ireland, powered by clean energy, where our environment, society and economy thrive".* Our Department's mission is that *"we work together to deliver climate action; the transformation of our energy systems; the protection and resilience of our environment and a resource-efficient economy".*

Le Chéile 28 sets out our commitment to championing equality, where we have also set out our commitment to human rights, equality and anti-discrimination.

Our strategic priorities are set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy published online at this link: Statement of Strategy 2025-2028

1.3 The Department

As of 30 September 2025, the Department has 673 staff, working across offices in Cavan, Cork, Wexford and Dublin.

The Department's structure includes seven line divisions reporting to a Secretary General, who reports to the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment, (Minister Darragh O'Brien). The Department also has two junior Ministers (Minister

of State Alan Dillon, with responsibility for Circular Economy and Minister of State Timmy Dooley with responsibility for the Marine).

The Corporate Affairs and Strategic Development Division is responsible for progressing the corporate strategic goal of “Sustain a high-performing, innovative and inclusive organisation focused on collaboratively delivering our vision and mission”. It is within these functions that broadly most of the service and people facing functions sit, including the Ministers Offices, customer service, human resources, governance such as FOI, Data Protection, and Work Environment - Facilities and Health and Safety, relating to the people the Department provides services to and the Department’s staff.

The Department’s line divisions are centred around Climate, Energy and the Environment, progressing five key strategic goals:

- Accelerate climate action and prepare Ireland for the impacts of a changing climate.
- Transform Ireland’s energy systems to be sustainable, affordable and secure.
- Protect and enhance our environment and improve the circular and resource-efficient economy.
- Advance our climate, energy and environment objectives through effective EU and international leadership, engagement and collaboration.
- Sustain a high-performing, innovative and inclusive organisation focused on collaboratively delivering our vision and mission.

There are ten state bodies under the aegis of the Department: Bord na Mona, Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), Electricity Supply Board (ESB), EirGrid, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), Loughs Agency, Maritime Area Regulatory Agency (MARA), National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA), and Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI).

Our Department recognises our impact on the daily life of its citizens and the people we serve. Our Department's policies impact on Ireland now and into the future. While most line sections do not provide services directly to the public, there are various public facing activities associated with the work of the Department, such as through the website, the Ministers Office, public awareness campaigns, and engagement and consultation with the public in legislation, policy making and implementation. There are stakeholder forums across the policy areas of the Department such as in the DMAP process, energy poverty stakeholder forum and climate dialogues.

Geological Survey Ireland, a section in the Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency division, is a part of the Department that is public-facing and provides services directly to the public, including operational activities, sales through their shop, access to datasets and other information, education and outreach services.

Circular Economy Division oversees Extended Producer Responsibility schemes which provide services to public such as Repak, Re-Turn and a future textiles Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme.

In the assessment of the human rights and equality issues we found strong evidence that divisions, in the delivery of specific functions, have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity of treatment, and protection of human rights of the persons to whom the Department services. We are mindful of our responsibility to the people we serve, and on the impact our policies have on daily life, and that for our environment, society and economy to thrive, our mission and policies need to have regard to, and consideration for, equality and human rights. However, we note that that the Department's understanding of the public sector equality and human rights duty could be enhanced. In order for us to continue to demonstrate the regard for equality and human rights issues, it is a priority for us to roll out knowledge building and awareness raising activities which will help us ensure consistent understanding and approaches across the varied work of the Department. This priority is reflected in the action plan.

1.4 Achievements in implementing the public sector duty

In the assessment of the human rights and equality issues, we found strong evidence that the divisions of the Department that are engaging with and consulting with the public in legislation, policy making and implementation, have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity of treatment, and protection of human rights of the persons to whom we provide services. However, there has been a gap in giving effect to the obligation of the duty, i.e. by having regard in a formal structured, documented way.

A key enabler of mainstreaming the public sector duty into our Department's processes and decision making is the inclusion of the public sector duty in our business planning process. This was implemented by providing reference to the public sector duty in documentation such as business planning guidelines, Statement of Strategy development requests, and in ensuring our Department's commitment to Public Sector Duty is satisfactorily reported on in the Department's Annual Report. This mainstreaming will be strengthened through a training and awareness campaign to build consistent understanding of the public sector equality and human rights duty across the Department, while the action plan is delivered.

We have listed some examples of current achievements in giving effect to the regard for equality and human rights below.

Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency - delivering a circular economy will have positive environmental, economic and social impacts.

- Circular Economy – following ReTurn scheme roll out, gaps in scheme design and development in relation to accessibility have been identified. DCEE and Re-Turn are working with disability groups to ensure full accessibility to the Deposit Return Scheme. An advisory group has been established and an accessibility audit carried out will make recommendations for further change.

- The ReTurn scheme held a consultation process to review the accessibility of the deposit return scheme for people with disabilities and mobility issues and

published a report with findings highlighting the progress made and remaining barriers.

- The Department is currently updating the Code of Corporate Governance for Compliance Schemes to including a section on Equality, Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion which would impose obligations on current and future Compliance Schemes and include the obligation to develop an EDI policy or equivalent policy.

- Inland Fisheries Policy Roadmap - A key principle for the development of a Policy Framework for Inland Fisheries in Ireland, is to respect the diversity of people and give people a fair chance to have their voice heard regardless of gender, age, race, abilities, sexual orientation, circumstances or wherever they live.

Climate and the Environment

- Climate action focused on ensuring an inclusive and just transition for all, engagement with and funding for community groups and local organisations. Public consultation and engagement includes: two National Climate Stakeholder Forums held annually; the annual National Youth Assembly on Climate, which enables young people to voice their concerns and recommendations for climate action; the annual Climate Conversations survey of climate attitudes and behaviour; Climate Actions Work, the development of a framework to support community-led climate action, and the National Clean Air Communications Campaign.

- Community Climate Action Programme continues to fund local organisations working to build low carbon communities and funds projects that contribute to national climate and energy targets across five themes: community energy, travel, food and waste, shopping and recycling, and local climate and environmental action.

- Climate change Adaptation – the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) establishes a set of key principles to be used when planning for and

implementing adaptation actions aimed at reducing vulnerabilities, enhancing resilience, and safeguarding communities, sectors, regions, ecosystems, and economies against the adverse impacts of climate change. Sectoral Adaptation plans have been published for 13 key sectors, which set out actions across thirteen key sectors to ensure that Ireland's society, ecosystems, infrastructure, economy, and competitiveness are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Sectors are required to include a consideration of just resilience in their SAPs, which means prioritising vulnerable and marginalised communities, ensuring that adaptation efforts are inclusive, and support fair and equitable outcomes.

- EU Social Climate Action Fund and Social Climate Plan to support a socially fair transition towards climate neutrality and, specifically, to support vulnerable households, vulnerable micro-enterprises and vulnerable transport users through temporary direct income support and through measures and investments in the buildings and transport sectors.

- Just Transition policy in climate action aims to ensure that the social, equity and justice implications of climate policies are considered across all areas of climate action. Developing a Just Transition Strategy to strengthen structures around policy integration is a key deliverable of the Department's 2025-2028 Statement of Strategy.

- In terms of regional implementation, the EU Just Transition Fund Programme supports projects that aim to address the employment, economic, social and environmental impacts that come with the shift away from carbon-intense activities in the wider Midlands region. The "Horizontal Principles" derived from the European Pillar of Social Rights, requires that equity, protection of human rights, and non-discrimination, are embedded in project eligibility and selection criteria. This ensures that funded projects to support people and communities that may be negatively affected by the transition are compliant with equity, protection of human rights and non-discrimination.

- The "A Living Land" final report of the Land use review involved active engagement with a broad range of key stakeholders, participating in the

Citizen Engagement Working Group and the Technical Working Group. In these forums the evidence, analysis and emerging outputs were discussed and feedback from the Groups greatly assisted in shaping the review. This enabled the review to learn from multiple examples of creative, innovative, and inspiring community and farm level projects.

Energy – tackling energy poverty and providing secure, sustainable and affordable energy for the future.

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7, focusing on Affordable and Clean Energy, aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all by 2030.

- The National Energy Affordability Taskforce has been established to identify, assess and implement measures that will enhance energy affordability for households and businesses while delivering key renewable commitments and protecting security of supply and economic stability. The taskforce published an interim plan in 2025 including measures to support customers in Winter 2025/26. The taskforce will also publish an Energy Affordability Action Plan in 2026, which will make recommendations in respect of structural reforms which can be undertaken to enhance energy affordability. The taskforce work programme will include consideration of targeted measures to support groups identified as being particularly vulnerable to energy poverty.

- ESRI research funded by Government suggests that women, in particular those who are lone parents and older women are especially affected by energy poverty due to structural inequalities in income distribution, socio-economic status and the gender care gap. The Energy Poverty Action Plan aims to combat energy poverty and sets out actions to address inability of a household to afford adequate warmth and lighting in the home due to low income, high-energy prices, and poor energy efficiency.

- The Warmer Homes Scheme, residential and community energy efficiency upgrade schemes, are delivering free upgrades to those in or at risk of energy poverty. A Warmth and Wellbeing pilot scheme was delivered to improve the

living conditions of vulnerable people at risk of energy poverty and living with chronic respiratory conditions. Elements of this scheme are to be mainstreamed into Warmer Homes Scheme.

- Electricity Costs Emergency Benefit Schemes were delivered to 2025 providing credits to customers to alleviate the burden of rising electricity costs.

- Community Benefit Funds (CBFs) under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) - put communities in the lead and channel an annual guaranteed €2 per megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity generated into locally led, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-focused projects. The first CBFs from the first RESS auction started operating and reporting their activities last year, with an estimated total annual contribution of over €1 million.

- The Small-Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (SRESS) provides support to communities, farmers, and small businesses to establish their own renewable energy projects.

EU & International Affairs and Marine Planning

- Sustainable Development Goals - which represent the international community's collective roadmap towards a safer, fairer, more prosperous, and sustainable world. SDGs address critical areas such as poverty eradication, climate action, and improved living standards for all. DCEE is responsible for coordinating government action on integrating SDGs and leading the whole of government effort to raise awareness. The Programme for Government commits to ensuring that SDGs are fully integrated into national policies and initiatives, ensuring that each goal is actively pursued across all levels of government. In our Department this means that we aim to include key principles such as leaving no one behind, and ensure these are embedded in all of our policies and strategies to achieve a sustainable future for all.

- Marine Planning Governance and Regulation: The SC-DMAP (South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy) is being established as part of the new plan-led approach to the sustainable future

management of Ireland's seas and oceans. The SC-DMAP guides future activities, including the development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE), to address key challenges such as energy security, climate change, and biodiversity loss. The process to establish the SC-DMAP is taking place according to the ecosystem- based approach in making spatial and policy assessments based on ecological and socio-economic considerations, and by involving stakeholders and the public throughout the process. The establishment of the SC-DMAP has taken place through extensive consultation with local coastal communities along the South Coast. Protecting and enhancing our coastal communities and marine environment, while at the same time providing a long-term source of secure renewable energy, is central to the sustainable forward planning process in the marine area. The implementation of the SC-DMAP objectives will further enable the South Coast region to maximise and capture the full potential of the economic opportunities, as well as seeking to address the energy security of supply and climate crises. The establishment of the SC-DMAP, and similar future plans, will spur positive societal change through harnessing green energy to drive sustainable local and regional development. The SC-DMAP will include actions to support research, innovation, skills development, enterprise, jobs growth and the sustainable development of economic clusters in the ORE sector to support the development and operation of ORE projects in the SC-DMAP area. The development and implementation of SC-DMAP will include continued engagement with South Coast stakeholders, including local coastal communities and fishers.

- Any public consultations and/or engagements in relation to the Ministers residual regulatory functions under the Foreshore Act are carried out in a fair and equitable manner and consider the accessibility needs of participants in this process.

- Marine Planning Legislation: As part of the process of providing for legislative requirements of the Department MPL consider informally whether the proposed legislation breaches any human rights e.g. freedom of movement, right to enjoyment of the marine space.. Any public consultations and/or

engagements in relation to the Ministers residual regulatory functions under the Foreshore Act are carried out in a fair and equitable manner and consider the accessibility needs of participants in this process. Where public consultation is required marine planning legislation ensure that public consultation exercises take account of accessibility matters for those who may wish to engage in the process.

2 Equality Diversity Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan

The Strategic Human Resources Section has oversight of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) function in the Department as it relates to employees. Our Department's EDI Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2025 was launched internally in July 2023 and published in February 2024 at this link Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The EDI Strategy and Action Plan is based on our vision for the Department to be an inclusive workplace, where everyone is encouraged to be themselves knowing that they will be accepted and treated fairly with dignity and respect. We aim to deliver on our vision of an organisation where EDI is embedded and embraced, where EDI informs policy development and decision making, and is reflected in our values and behaviours. The implementation of the public sector equality and human rights duty is recognised as a key enabler in developing organisational capability to embed an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective in the day-to-day work of the Department. A key further action in the EDI Strategy and Action Plan is to develop a framework for consultation with internal and external stakeholders to better include the perspectives of people with lived experience of discrimination, inequality and socio-economic marginalisation in the policies that affect them. This will be enabled through the implementation of the Public Sector Duty Action Plan.

We completed our first EDI Policy in October 2024. This policy shows how we will deliver on our commitment to promote equality and fairness and combat discrimination, as an employer and a public body. This commitment applies to everyone, regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion,

age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community. This policy is a key achievement in the implementation of the public sector duty as it relates to our employees.

2.1 Equality Diversity and Inclusion Governance and Employee Resource Groups

The Department has three Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) – DCEE Women's Network, Pride@DCEE LGBTQ+ network and the EDI Staff Voice Channel, building on the work of previous EDI Groups and established from the EDI Strategy and Action Plan. Along with the ERGs, DCEE also has Menopause Champions that host regular Menopause Cafés for employees. These ERGs are supported by Strategic Human Resources Section and sit on the EDI Leadership Council.

A Departmental Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Leadership Council was established to oversee the implementation of the EDI Strategy and Action Plan and implementation of our Public Sector Duty. The EDI Leadership Council reports to Management Board and includes representatives from the ERGs, staff representatives from across the business areas and corporate section representatives. A public sector duty working group reports to the EDI Leadership Council, this group is tasked with progressing the public sector duty assessment and action plan; and reporting on progress annually.

3 Sustainable Development Goals

The principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are also enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Department's EDI Policy provides a strong framework to embed the SDG Agenda 2030 principles in our work practices. Leaving no one behind is a central commitment given under the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. To successfully implement Agenda 2030, this principle must be embedded within our work practices. The national definition of 'Leave No-one Behind', agreed by the participants of the SDG National Stakeholder Forum is to ensure *"An inclusive and empathetic society that empowers everyone to engage with and be represented in decision making, accelerating dignity, and enabling equal opportunities and equitable outcomes"*. The EDI policy serves to deliver on SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all

Women and Girls; SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth's 10: Reduce Inequalities and SDG 16; Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, with SDG 3; Good Health and Well-being also benefitting.

DCEE has overall responsibility for promoting the SDGs and overseeing their coherent implementation across government.

3.1 The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025 - 2030

The National Strategy for Women and Girls was published by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality in November 2025. This strategy is Ireland's plan for advancing gender equality over the next five years. The strategy vision is for an Ireland where women and girls can thrive in a gender equal society, with seven objectives, each corresponding to one or more areas of women's experience where public policy action is required to address gender inequalities. The objectives will be achieved through actions carried out by public authorities across all areas of government. This Strategy is also aligned with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, and its implementation will advance Ireland's work under both these frameworks. Progress will be monitored towards the objectives of the Strategy by reference to agreed, recognised indicators of gender equality, including those developed for measuring progress towards Sustainable Development Goal Five.

Our Department is committed to delivering on its responsibility to address the climate crisis, and this includes addressing the impacts it will have on all people. A key principle of our climate action is a just transition to account for those negatively impacted by the transition and to ensure no one is left behind in the process. In overseeing the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Department maps the alignment of the Climate Action Plans to the SDGs, including SDG 5 – Gender Equality.

Our Department will progress our specific actions in the National Strategy for Women and Girls, as well as whole of government and cross departmental actions as they arise under the Strategy Actions Plans.

3.2 National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 - 2030

The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030 was published by Department of Children, Disability and Equality in September 2025. This strategy is Ireland's plan to advance the realisation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including commitment to the principles of the Convention - to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all disabled people and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. The strategy goal is to ensure that disabled people are supported and empowered to live full lives of their own choosing.

The strategy adopts a whole of government (mainstream first) approach to supporting disabled people. The strategy will align to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a global blueprint for reducing inequality, improving health and education and spurring economic growth.

Our Department will progress whole of government and cross departmental actions as they arise under the strategy Programme plans of action.

4 Disability Liaison Officer

The Department's Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) function sits within the EDI Team working across Strategic Human Resources Section (SHRS). The DLO acts as the point of contact for disabled employees and employees with disabilities or long-term impairment, their managers and the HR team. The DLO's role is to assist and support, in confidence, by providing information, appropriate contacts, guidance, suggestions and advice for civil servants with disabilities and their line manager, and for facilitating the implementation of agreed reasonable accommodations.

A workplace accommodation form is provided to new joiners who indicate they require a reasonable accommodation as part of the assignment process either as new joiners or on mobility. However, reasonable accommodation can be requested from the DLO at any stage of employment.

A reasonable accommodation process is in place across SHRS linking in with People operations, Resourcing, Workplace Environment and Health and Safety and Information Systems Section as well as managers to ensure a holistic, individual based approach to the implementation of agreed accommodations, whether these be around access, environmental, assistive technology or around communication and management of workloads, working time and or location.

Information about the DLO, reasonable accommodation and the annual census of disability is available on the Department's Intranet. In the 2025 EDI survey, a number of questions were included on disability, neurodiversity and interaction with the DLO, and managers and the analysis of this data will inform the future work of the DLO.

4.1 Annual Census of Disability

The DLO is also responsible for carrying out a Census of all staff to accurately determine the percentage of disabled staff and staff with disabilities within the organisation. This enables us as a public service employer to meet our legal obligation under the Disability Act 2005 to report to the National Disability Authority each year on the number and percentage of employees with disabilities. This annual census data now also includes a separate percentage of employees who consider themselves neurodivergent or neurodiverse.

For the 2024 returns, the results of the census indicate, that based on a response rate of 53%, the percentage of staff reporting a disability was 7.64%. Separately, 7.02% of staff identified as being neurodiverse or neurodivergent.

The Disability act 2005 definition is *"Disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment."* As an organisation we acknowledge that some employees have difficulties with this definition and how it applies to themselves and so offer some context in terms of the phrase "substantial restriction ", highlighting existing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from getting a job, traveling to where they want to go and having a social life. Some of these barriers may include but are not limited to:

- Lack of access to public transport services
- Inaccessible public spaces
- Inaccessible written, spoken, digital (websites, mobile apps) and signed communications.
- Lack of awareness that Irish Sign Language can be the main language used by people who are d/Deaf and/or hard of hearing.
- Lack of awareness regarding different ways people process information.
- Lack of awareness regarding different ways people communicate.
- Lack of awareness of the importance of quiet spaces or rooms so that people can relax and re-regulate themselves.
- Lack of awareness of the impact brightly lit and noisy environments can have on some people.

In relation to neurodiversity, the context given is that some people process information and communicate to other people in a different way, including autistic people, and people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Epilepsy, Tourette's Syndrome, or Dyscalculia.

5 Accessibility

The Department has an Access Officer, in the Corporate Services Section (CSS). The Access Officer is responsible for providing, arranging or co-ordinating assistance to persons with disabilities who wish to access the services provided by the Department. This role is in accordance with Section 26(2) of the Disability Act.

The Communications and Media Relations Section (CMRS) have responsibility for Digital Accessibility and have a continued focus on ensuring the Department's website content on gov.ie is fully accessible, that all document templates are fully accessible, and are committed to ensuring that the Department's social channels are

employing alt text and are available in other languages as required, on an ongoing basis.

Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpretation is provided for staff events as appropriate, and for media/launch events such as televised press conferences. The Department is committed to providing ISL interpretation to members of the public as required.

6 Assess, Address and Report

Section 42 of the IHREC Act states that a public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—

(a) eliminate discrimination,

(b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons

to whom it provides services, and

(c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom

it provides services.

During the 2025 Business Planning Process, the EDI Team and Strategic Implementation Team (SIT) carried out a data gathering exercise to have business units assess and identify human rights and equality issues relevant to the performance of their functions. This information was then reviewed to identify gaps and measures to address these issues. These actions are to be addressed during the cycle of the Statement of Strategy, 2025-2028. This material combined with actions related to the EDI Strategy and Action Plan; Gender Pay Gap report and Accessibility working group form the basis of the following Assessment and Action Plan.

The implementation of the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 Regulations has led to the Department having a process to review and report on gender pay gap and related initiatives annually. In terms of assessing equality and human rights issues, gender and gender balance continue to be recognised as an area to be addressed.

Gender Pay Gap reports are published on the department's website at this link: Gender Pay Gap Reports - Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment

In addition, further equality and human rights issues identified in the assessment were related to disability, specifically accessibility of information and communications, and accessibility in schemes.

During the assessment process the EDI and Strategic Implementation Teams, and public sector duty working group identified the need for foundational knowledge building across the Department to improve awareness and understanding of the public sector duty. This is to be addressed as a priority in the implementation of the action plan.

Consultation on the first public sector duty assessment has been internal, and the action plan includes actions around external consultation and engagement. Future assessment of equality and human rights issues will include external consultation.

The EDI Team and Public Sector Duty Working Group will collaborate across the Department to implement the action plan and identify further relevant human rights and equality issues relevant to the performance of the Department's functions as they arise.

Public bodies report on progress on actions identified from the assessment of equality and human rights issues in their Annual Reports. The public sector duty working group will report progress on our website at this link Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty .

6.1 Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Action Plan

6.1.1 Awareness and Understanding of Public Sector Duty

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
EDI	Public Sector Duty	Assessment process highlighted inconsistent Awareness and Understanding of Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty across DCEE To date focus has primarily been on DCEE as an employer rather than public policy maker, legislator or service provider meaning there is insufficient awareness or guidance on public sector duty obligations for schemes and policy design and development	• Mandatory training for staff across DCEE on equality, human rights and the Public Sector Duty across all grades (Q1-2 2026) • Develop regular agenda item for public sector equality and human rights issues to be discussed and reviewed at quarterly divisional meetings or other relevant regular meetings. • Review 2025 business planning approach to public sector duty and identify awareness and training actions to improve understanding of alignment to strategic cycle (Q3/4 2025 – Q12026) • Develop guidance for consideration of equality and human rights issues when reviewing in business planning (Q32025)	2026
Public Sector Duty Working Group	Public Sector Duty	Feedback from assessment process identified need for consistent approach to impact assessments to ensure Department has regard to human rights, in particular with reference to the 9 grounds outlined in equality legislation.	• Develop a pilot Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment template focussed on the statutory grounds of discrimination, to be used by functional areas when developing or reviewing policies, plans, programmes / schemes which are delivered directly to the public and review its effectiveness.	2026

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
		To date focus has primarily been on DCEE as an employer rather than public policy maker, legislator or service provider meaning there is insufficient awareness or guidance on public sector duty obligations for schemes and policy design and development	• Develop set of case studies and lessons learned, looking at scheme development as a starting point (H22026). • Identify best practice inclusion in stakeholder forums already in place and share learnings. (H22026) • Develop guidance on when it is appropriate and how to assess for equality and human rights issues when preparing policy, in advance of preparing for legislation (H22026) • Share guidance to relevant sections on “Equality and Human Rights, 2021-2027 and include in best practice resources on Intranet (2025)	
Public Sector Duty Working Group	Public Sector Duty	2025 assessment had an Internal consultation focus – there was no external consultation with service users in development of assessment and action plan	• Conduct a service user consultation to ascertain the equality and human rights issues across all functional areas and strategic planning, via survey and focus group using the IHREC consultation guide. • Conduct a further assessment of public sector equality and human rights issues, informed by the consultation with service users	2027
SDGs	SDGs	Ensure the SDGs, including key principles such as leaving no one behind, are embedded in all policies and strategies to achieve a sustainable future for all	• Define and implement mechanisms to ensure SDGs are embedded in policies and strategies	2026 - 2028

6.1.2 Accessibility, Communications and Customer Service

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
EDI, Communications and Media Relations Section	Irish Sign Language	Need for consistent approach to how ISL interpretation is made available to members of the public as well as employees	• Conduct review of how ISL Act 2017 is operated in the Department, how ISL interpretation is provided to members of the public and refresh staff understanding of ISL Act 2017 responsibilities for events and provision of services (2026) • Develop and communicate staff procedures for sourcing and arranging interpretation for persons seeking to avail of or access our services through ISL (2025)	2026

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
EDI, Corporate Services	Accessibility of DCEE environment and communications	Feedback from public engagement identified need for consistent and streamlined approach to physical and digital accessibility	• Establish Accessibility Working Group (Q3 2025) • Implement the findings and recommendations from 2025 Staff Accessibility Survey with EDI Staff Voice Channel • Conduct accessibility audits on DCEE buildings to identify reasonable improvements for service user access	2025 - 2027

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
Accessibility Working Group	Accessibility of DCEE public engagement and communications	Feedback from public engagement identified need for consistent approach to public consultations (in person or online) to ensure accessible to all.	• Conduct Accessibility audit across external communications and develop an action plan (H1 2026). • Incorporate NDA guidance “Participation Matters” into consultation processes to ensure inclusivity and consistency. (H22026) • Adopt NDA guidance on Accessibility of documents into web publication process. (2025-2026) • Develop and implement a standardised Communications Accessibility Checklist to be used across all digital and print communications (including social media, intranet, and email newsletters) covering requirements such as alt text, plain language, captioning, colour contrast, and document formatting. • Develop and deliver training for all staff on how to prepare accessible documents and content (H22026) • Create an accessibility internal resource hub or toolkit including templates, checklists, and guidance on accessibility, inclusive language, and Irish language content.	2025-2027

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
			• Review the feasibility of utilising EU Survey platform for public consultations, which is designed to be accessible to as many people as possible, including disabled people or people with disabilities (2027) • Provide as much consultation information as possible as accessible web text. PDF documents may be used for supplementary materials such as detailed reports. A fully accessible version of any PDF is available on request via email. (ongoing) • Develop guidance on sharing consultation surveys internally to DCEE Employee Resource Groups and other stakeholder groups across Department to gather feedback from lived experience ahead of publication (2026)	
Communications and Media Relations Section	Digital accessibility/Disability	No standardised process exists to assess or ensure consistency in digital accessibility across all communication materials (e.g. alt text quality, colour contrast, accessible formatting)	• Develop and implement a standardised Communications Accessibility Checklist to be used across all digital and print communications (including social media, intranet, and email newsletters) covering requirements such as alt text, plain language, captioning, colour contrast, and document formatting. • Introduce regular accessibility and inclusivity audits of communications.	Q22026

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
			• Create an accessibility internal resource hub or toolkit including templates, checklists, and guidance on accessibility, inclusive language, and Irish language content.	
Communications and Media Relations Section	External Communications	Content moderation is in place across digital platforms to monitor and remove hate speech or discriminatory content. Content moderation practices are not formally documented or consistently applied across all channels	• Review content moderation policies across all digital platforms, creating clear guidance on identifying and addressing discriminatory or harmful content.	Q22026
Customer Service	Public Sector Duty awareness in Customer Service	Need for socialisation and awareness of potential equality and human rights issues when answering customer service queries and communicating with customers.	• Update case assignment message for coordinators responding to customer service to link to any public sector duty supports they might need to have regard to equality and human rights issues, and accessibility when answering queries. • Ensure Customer Service Charter for DCEE references and communicates our commitment to public sector duty	2026
CMRS, CSS, Customer Service	Accessibility	Some contact details for alternative contact methods on website not up to date	• Ensure contact information for relevant roles is kept up to date. • Implement a scheduled review process to ensure contact details remain accurate and accessible	2025

6.1.3 Employment, Contracts and Bodies under the aegis

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
EDI, Corporate Governance, Secretary General's Office	Bodies under the Aegis, Schemes	Need for DCEE as parent Department to support understanding of public sector duty in bodies under the aegis and schemes	• DCEE to communicate to bodies under its aegis and to schemes under its aegis such as EPR schemes on the importance of having regard to equality and human rights in the performance of their functions. • Share knowledge and practice with bodies under the aegis on employment of people with disabilities.	2026
EDI, SHRS	Inclusion	Employee demographics are not yet fully representative of the broad diversity of Irish society	• Participation in inclusive TY schemes, internship and apprenticeship programmes to increase support and recruitment of those with a disability or membership of a marginalised group	2025-2028

Function / Purpose (owners)	Area of Work	Gap Identified	Actions to be put in place	Timeline
EDI Team	Corporate responsibility	Gap in guidance for sections managing contractors around EDI, equality and human rights. Need to ensure budget, procurement and funding allocation has regard to equality and human rights	• Identify actions to ensure that our budgeting, procurement and funding allocation policies reflects our Duty obligations. • Generate guidelines to support the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion values amongst contractors to the Department for inclusion in the wider contractor processes	2027
People Operations	Gender Equality	GPG data identifies Take-up of work-sharing not representative of gender balance in the Department	• Engage with Womens Network and Management Board to put in place actions to promote and increase access and take up of family and care friendly policies across the Department. • Progress supplementary Gender Balance Targets 2030 paper, outlining gender balance data in the Department, initiatives, supports and internal promotion data. The paper will also set out the Department's long-term gender balance targets that align with our EDI Policy and gender balance actions to be undertaken to promote gender equality and eliminate DCEE's gender pay gap.	2025 – 2026

7 Links and Resources

Item	Link
DCEE Customer Service	Customer Service
DCEE Statement of Strategy	Statement of Strategy 2025-2028
DCEE Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty	Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty
DCEE DLO	Disability Liaison Officer
DCEE Access Officer	Access Officer
Equality and Human Rights in EU Funds, 2021 – 2027	Regulations and Guidance 21-27 - EU Funds
National Accessibility Review	National Accessibility Review - Re-Turn
National Adaptation Framework Sectoral Adaptation Plans	Sectoral Adaptation Planning
National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 – 2030	The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030
National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025 - 2030	National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025 – 2030
Sustainable Development Goals National Stakeholder Forum January 2023	January 2023 Sustainable Development Goals National Stakeholder Forum