



## Equal Opportunities, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

### Introduction

The Land Development Agency, referred to in the policy as the “Agency” or “LDA” recognises our responsibility to provide a work environment where equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion are promoted and respected.

The LDA is a place where everyone, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, disability, and social circumstances, feels safe, feels a sense of belonging, is respected, and valued and has their individual needs understood and met as far as resources allow within the context of the service provided. Equality of opportunity is an integral part of the LDA’s overall policy and relies on the contribution of management and staff in ensuring the overall effectiveness of the application of the policy. While equal opportunities are formally assigned as an integral part of the responsibility of management, all staff are encouraged to promote equality for all in the workplace.

### Statement of Commitment

This policy seeks to ensure that the LDA:

- Is free from discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, or victimisation;
- Accommodates diversity across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation, and meets the needs that are specific to particular groups of employees;
- Makes reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities; and
- Seeks to benefit all employees from across the nine grounds by promoting equality and implementing positive action where necessary.

The 9 equality grounds detailed under the Employment Equality legislation are as follows:

- **Gender:** this means a man, a woman or transgender person
- **Civil status:** includes single, married, separated, divorced, widowed people, civil partners, and former civil partners
- **Family status:** this refers to the parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability
- **Sexual orientation:** includes but not limited to gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual orientations
- **Religion:** means religious belief, background, outlook or none
- **Age:** this does not apply to a person aged under 16
- **Disability:** includes people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions
- **Race:** includes race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- **Traveller community:** recognised as an ethnic group

## Aims

The LDA's Diversity and Inclusion Policy will work to ensure that everyone who interacts with the Authority is:

- Treated fairly and without discrimination throughout their dealings with the LDA
- Treated equally in a healthy and safe environment free from hazards
- Treated with dignity and respect in a fair and consistent manner in an environment where inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable

## Scope

This policy applies to

- All employees
- All applicants for employment
- All members of the Board
- All those who work on behalf of the LDA (e.g., contractors)

This policy relates to all areas of employment practice, including but not limited to recruitment and selection, training and development, progression (incl. promotion), pay, employment conditions and retention. It also relates to all services provided by the LDA, in its activities both internal and external.

## Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures;

- Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure

## Key Diversity and Inclusion Concepts

**Diversity** can be defined as the visible and non-visible differences between individuals. These differences can be related to race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender, as well as the many differences in values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural views, skills, knowledge, education, background, employment, parenthood, marital status, and life experiences of every individual.

**Inclusion** can be defined as the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and contribute fully to the organization's success.

**Equal Opportunities** can be defined as ensuring all those involved with or wishing to be involved with the organisation, regardless of their diversity, are provided with opportunity based on their ability or potential to perform the required activity.

**Discrimination** is unequal treatment of an individual because of their membership of a particular socio-economic background or group under the '9 equality grounds'. It may be direct, for example, refusing to send someone on a training course because they are married or have children. It may be indirect, for example, declaring a post as being suitable only for a full-time members of team members without proper justification (i.e. establishing the need for a full-time members of team members rather than for part-time members or job sharing).

Discrimination may be subtle and unconscious and may not be easy to identify. For example, discrimination sometimes results from general assumptions about the capabilities, characteristics and interests of particular groups or individuals, which are allowed to influence the treatment of team members or job applicants or clients. This includes unconscious bias.

**Harassment or bullying** has the effect of causing undue stress on individuals and of de-motivating them. Harassment or bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and serves to undermine the safe, supportive, and welcoming environment which the LDA wishes to encourage.

### **Selection and Recruitment**

The LDA is committed to equal opportunity of employment and all employment decisions will be based on merit, qualifications, and abilities. Employee rights under the Employment Equality Act are guaranteed, and no one will receive less favourable treatment than someone else because of their gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race, or membership of the Travelling Community. The LDA will ensure that the principles of employment equality are applied to recruitment, promotion, training, career development and to all terms and conditions of employment.

Team members involved in the selection and recruitment process, and in the management of team members, will receive appropriate training to ensure they recognise when they are making stereotypical assumptions or judgements about people, and avoid any discriminatory practices in the way in which they shortlist, recruit, or manage team members. This will include unconscious bias training.

The LDA will strive to achieve equality of opportunity by continuously monitoring its employment practices to ensure that it creates a positive working environment at all times.

The LDA's selection procedures provide equal access at all stages to all candidates.

### **Employment of people with disabilities**

Public sector bodies are obliged under the Disability Act 2005

- To promote and support the employment of people with disabilities.
- To ensure, where practicable, that 3% of all staff employed are people with disabilities; and
- To report every year on the number and percentage of employees with disabilities.

The Disability Act 2005 defines disability as: *Disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the persons 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.*

In order to meet its legal responsibility, the LDA collects data from staff on an annual basis. This information is used for statistical purposes only and all information is stored securely and confidentially. Employees have a legal right to see the information on record about their disability status and to seek to alter it if they believe it is no longer accurate, in line with the Authority's data protection policy.

### **Training Opportunities**

A balanced participation by all groups in the training opportunities open to them will be encouraged and extraneous factors will not influence training decisions.

The LDA's promotion procedures will not discriminate under the 9 equality grounds detailed under the Employment Equality legislation. Management will ensure that all staff are aware of career/promotional opportunities by circulating details and posting them at obvious points throughout the organisation.

### **Grievances**

The Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts provides protection for individuals who, in good faith, have acted in pursuance of a claim under any of those Acts. The LDA will treat all complaints by individuals with fairness and sensitivity and in as confidential a manner as possible. Any employee who has a complaint concerning a breach of this policy may bring such a complaint to their line manager or HR. Complaints under this policy will be managed under the Grievance Procedure or Dignity at Work procedure.

### **Implementation of the Policy**

The successful implementation of all strands of this policy relies on the mainstreaming of equality and diversity issues within the LDA's processes. This will be achieved through the implementation of agreed Action Plans, which will be developed by the HR Department and rolled out across the LDA.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with the LDA Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and that equal opportunities principles are respected. Heads of Department and people managers across the LDA are responsible for ensuring that this policy is applied. Training will be provided to all managers and employees to support the implementation of the policy. Further appropriate actions will be identified and implemented on an ongoing basis. The HR Department will systematically evaluate the effectiveness of its diversity & inclusion policy by a variety of means.

### **Relevant Legislation**

[The Equality Employment Acts 1998-2015](#)

[The Equal Status Act 2000](#)

### **Revision History**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
September 19	1	Policy Introduction
November 21	2	Policy review and expansion
January 2	3	Policy finalisation