



South Dublin County Council

Equal Opportunity Policy

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Part One: Statement of Equal Opportunity

Policy Statement

- a) South Dublin County Council is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in its employment practices regarding access to employment. This policy will ensure that no individual receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender (including gender identity), marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, race and membership of the Travelling Community as defined in the Employment Equality Act 1998.

- b) The management of South Dublin County Council will actively support, encourage and implement equality of opportunity in the workplace.

- c) South Dublin County Council is committed to the implementation of a positive action programme to complement equality legislation and to realise the equality policy. It is within the framework of the policy declaration and the provisions of all the relevant legislation that the following statements of principle have been developed.

Selection and Recruitment

- a) Positions in South Dublin County Council are open to all suitably qualified individuals.

- b) Recruitment and selection methods are designed to encourage applications from all potential candidates. There is a commitment that there will be no express or implied discrimination against any candidate at any stage of the selection process. All job selection methods in relation to recruitment, selection or promotion will ensure that no job applicant or staff member receives less favorable treatment on any of the nine grounds contained in the Employment Equality Act 1998.

- c) Short-listing of candidates will be on the basis of pre-determined criteria. All interview board members will be trained in, and will use, good interview practices particularly in relation to the prevention of discrimination. All questions asked at interview will be directed solely towards assessing the suitability of candidates for the prospective positions. Individuals will be selected, promoted and treated solely on the basis of their abilities and according to the requirements of the job. They will be given equal opportunity to demonstrate and develop their abilities and to progress within South Dublin County Council.

Training and Development

- a) South Dublin County Council is committed to providing training, including on the job training, for staff to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. It is an integral part of that commitment that all staff are given equal access to relevant training. South Dublin County Council recognises that training, both formal and informal is important to career development.
- b) South Dublin County Council will try, in so far as is reasonably practicable, to meet any special and / or additional appropriate training needs of staff. All options with regard to timing of training courses will be considered.
- c) Work practices in South Dublin County Council will ensure that no discrimination exists in relation to employment and training issues, for example work assignments or access to challenging work, which are determined on the basis of ability and qualifications.

Home and Work Commitments

South Dublin County Council is committed to encouraging employee and family-friendly policies. To this end and subject to the overall needs and requirements of the organisation, it tries to facilitate staff in successfully integrating their domestic life with their working life, for example job-sharing, part-time working, career breaks, and so on.

Harassment and Bullying

South Dublin County Council is committed to the creation and maintenance of a positive and healthy working environment free from all forms of sexual harassment, harassment and bullying, and one which encourages staff to achieve their full potential. To give practical expression to this commitment South Dublin County Council has introduced a formal policy in compliance with employment legislation. **The purpose of this policy is to:**

- Raise the awareness of management and staff to the identification of the potential for this form of unacceptable behavior.
- Deter offensive and unacceptable behavior.
- Support the prevention of sexual harassment, harassment and bullying in the workplace.
- Ensure a fair and speedy resolution procedure.
- Offer a confidential and appropriate redress system.

Responsibilities of Management and Staff

- a) It is recognised that a policy of equality places a range of responsibilities on management and on staff members, individually and collectively.
- b) The management at all levels within South Dublin County Council actively supports, encourages and implements equality of opportunity in the workplace. Details of equality action policies are circulated to all staff so that they are aware of their personal responsibilities in this area.

- c) A procedure will be established to deal with complaints of breaches of this policy relating to the nine grounds as specified in the Employment Equality Act 1998. This procedure will ensure that every complaint is investigated thoroughly, sensitively and with confidentiality. The complainant will be kept informed throughout the investigation process. The findings of the investigation will be communicated without undue delay.

- d) All South Dublin County Council's policies and procedures will be reviewed by management and the Equality Action Team on a regular basis, to ensure that they contribute, as far as possible, to the promotion of equal opportunities.

Part Two: Programme for Equality

Equal Opportunity Policy

- a) South Dublin County Council is firmly committed to its policy on equality of opportunity contained in the Statement of Equal Opportunity, which is set out in Part One of this document.

- b) This Programme for Equality sets out the following action plan for the implementation of the equality statements:-
 - 1) South Dublin County Council values and recognises staff as its primary resource. It is in the County Council's interest to provide the resources and the environment in which the potential of all staff can be fully realised.
 - 2) Staff can feel confident of fair treatment in a harassment-free environment.
 - 3) South Dublin County Council recognises the need to encourage a participative approach to equality and mutual respect in the workplace. Management at all levels will actively support, encourage and implement best practice in this regard at all times.
 - 4) An **Equality Officer** has been appointed by South Dublin County Council. Any staff member may contact this Officer in relation to equality matters. The Equality Officer will liaise with management and communicate agreed objectives and measures to the staff of South Dublin County Council.
 - 5) An **Equality Action Team**, representative of management and staff has been appointed. **The team will:-**
 - Promote equality issues generally within South Dublin County Council.

- Devise measures to achieve equal opportunities.
 - Draw up implementation programmes to meet equality objectives.
 - Conduct equality audits within South Dublin County Council.
 - Set objectives for redressing imbalances.
 - Ensure that equality awareness training is provided to management and staff.
 - Monitor progress in achieving objectives on an on-going basis.
 - Conduct an annual review of the policy statement.
- 6) South Dublin County Council will promote a culture of equal opportunity in how we interact with colleagues, in the use of language, documentation, pictures or other illustrations. Programmes to achieve this aim will be developed.
- 7) There will be a requirement to equality-proof all reports, training materials or other communications prepared for or by South Dublin County Council to eliminate discriminatory language.
- 8) South Dublin County Council will include a statement on equality issues in its Annual Report and other relevant publications.
- 9) Information and training on equality issues will be provided to all staff to support equal opportunities within the organisation.

Recruitment and Selection

- a) All employment advertisements will contain a statement that South Dublin County Council is an equal opportunities employer.
- b) Recruitment methods, documentation and all associated publicity material will contain nothing of a discriminatory nature.

- c) South Dublin County Council will encourage suitably qualified individuals to apply for available job opportunities.
- d) All recruitment or promotion selection methods are designed to select the most suitable candidate for the position and afford all candidates an equal opportunity of success.
- e) There will be no express or implied discrimination against any candidate during any stage of the recruitment or selection process. Interviewers will not make assumptions about the suitability of individuals for any positions on the grounds of gender (including gender identity), marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling Community.
- f) Short-listing criteria and all questions asked at interviews will be directed solely towards assessing the suitability of candidates for the available position.
- g) Where a job potentially involves attendance at unsocial hours, extensive travel, and so on, this will be included in the advertisement or job specification for the position.
- h) All positions to be filled internally will be advertised to ensure that all suitably qualified applicants are aware of the vacancy and can make an application. All staff on career-break, maternity leave, parental leave or special leave will be made aware of internal vacancies which arise.
- i) All interview board members will adhere to good interview practices particularly in relation to the prevention of discrimination. South Dublin County Council will work towards achieving a gender balance on all

interview boards. Training programmes will be introduced to ensure that all board members adhere to good interview practices.

- j) The Equality Action Team will monitor the implementation of these provisions.

Training and Career Development

- a) Heads of Departments are committed to providing equal access to training for all staff members.
- b) All options with regard to location and timing of training courses will be considered in order to enable the participation of all staff.
- c) Opportunities and support for study will be afforded equally to all staff.
- d) Training and development policy will try to promote changes of attitudes, perceptions and assumptions about traditional career roles, based for example on ageism or sexism which can adversely influence recruitment, placement, promotion and career decisions by management and individual staff members.
- e) It is the policy of South Dublin County Council to monitor all nominations for training courses and this will be the function of Human Resources. The monitoring will be done in the context of the needs of the organisation and the agreed career path of the person nominated.
- f) There will be no assumption with regard to a person's ability to do any job on the basis of their gender (including gender identity), marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling Community.

- g) South Dublin County Council will ensure that all reasonable accommodations are made to meet the requirements of disabled staff in terms of access to training for example the provision of training materials in a variety of formats, such as Braille, audio tape or large print.

Home and Work Commitments

- a) South Dublin County Council is committed to facilitate staff in successfully integrating their domestic life with their working life.
- b) Existing employee and family-friendly policies, for example career breaks, job-sharing, flexible working hours, parental leave and special leave for domestic purposes will be continued. These policies will be used to accommodate the needs of staff, subject to the requirements of South Dublin County Council.
- c) South Dublin County Council, subject to the overall needs and requirements of the organisation, will consider any other measures that allow staff to successfully combine their working and domestic lives.

Harassment and Bullying

South Dublin County Council will ensure that the Dignity at Work Policy is implemented, circulated to all staff members and reviewed on a regular basis.

Responsibilities of Management and Staff

- a) South Dublin County Council will ensure that management at all levels actively supports, encourages and implements equality of opportunity in the workplace.
- b) This programme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by management and the Equality Action Team. Strategies and action plans will be developed to combat any inequality in South Dublin County

Council. Details of Equality Action Plans will be circulated to all staff so that they are aware of their responsibilities in this area.

- c) Any complaint with regard to breaches of this policy should be directed to the Equality Officer, the Equality Action Team, a Designated Contact Person or brought to the attention of any member of management. Complaints can be made either verbally or in writing. Staff members who exercise their right to raise a complaint under this policy will be protected from victimisation.

(Sexual harassment, harassment and bullying matters are dealt with separately.)