



Equality and Diversity Policy and Statement

Lead Approver: Deputy CEO				
Cross referenced with these policies: All policies in WALK including: Recruitment lifecycle Policy; Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Victimisation Policy; Grievance Policy; Disciplinary Policy; Health and Safety Policy and Statement; Referrals Policy and Procedures; Learning and Development Policy; Investigations Policy; Complaints Policy for Service Users and Third Parties;				
Previous policy name: Equal opportunities and equal status policy				
Version	<i>Approved by Lead Approver</i>	<i>Approved by WALK Board (if applicable)</i>	<i>Launched Staff members</i>	<i>Operational Period</i>
Rev 3	12/11/2020		12/11/2020	November 2020 – November 2021.
Rev 4	08/11/2021	15/12/2021	13/01/2022	January 2022 – November 2022
Rev 4	08/11/22	13/01/23	13/01/23	November 2022 – November 2023

1.0 Policy Statement:

WALK is committed to equality of opportunity in all its policies, practices and services. We aim to ensure that no employee, service user, or stakeholder experiences less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling Community, in terms of recruitment, employment or accessing WALK's services. Equality of opportunity is an integral part of WALK'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.

2. Statement of commitment:

2.1 Equality:

This policy is informed by the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 and seeks to ensure that WALK and all the services provided by WALK are:

- Free from discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment or victimisation;
- Accommodate diversity across the nine grounds covered by equality legislation and meet the needs that are specific to particular groups of service users;
- Makes reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities; and
- Seeks to benefit all service users 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: a man, a woman or transgender person
- Civil Status: covering a person who is single, married, separated, divorced or widowed, in a civil partnership or previously in a civil partnership
- Family Status: covering a person who is pregnant, a parent of a person under 18 or the resident primary carer or a parent of a person with a disability
- Sexual Orientation: a person's sexual orientation including gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual
- Religion: Covering different religious belief, background or none

- Age: a person's age, this does not apply to a person aged under 16
- Disability: Covering people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions
- Race: Encompassing race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin; and
- Traveller Community: recognised as an ethnic group.

WALK aims to ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against for any reason with regard to employment or accessing its services.

2.2. Definitions:

Human Rights Human rights apply no matter where you are from, what you believe in, or how you choose to live your life (Amnesty International). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a human rights treaty adopted by the United Nations in 2006 which exists to protect and reaffirm the human rights of disabled people. The Irish Government signed the Convention in 2007 and in March 2018 the Convention was ratified.

Disability. 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. (Disability Act 2005)

Equality is not always about treating everyone the same – it is about treating people in such a way that the outcome for each person can be the same. This means putting things in place to support people to achieve similar outcomes. (www.intercultural.ie)

Diversity: The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences.

2.3 Aims:

WALK's Equality and Diversity Policy will work to ensure that everyone who interacts with WALK is:

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

3. Selection and recruitment:

3.1 Employment

WALK 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.

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

4. Training and development:

4.1 Training:

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

4.2 Promotion

WALK's promotion procedures will not discriminate under the 9 equality grounds detailed under the Employment Equality legislation.

4.3 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. WALK will treat all grievances by individuals with fairness and sensitivity and in as confidential a manner as possible.

4.4 Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation: WALK is committed to providing a safe and secure working environment that is free of harassment (including sexual harassment) and bullying and within which all members of staff are treated with dignity and respect.

4.5 Complaints: A person can make a complaint under the complaints system for service users and third parties. **WALK will treat all complaints by individuals with fairness and sensitivity and in as confidential a manner as possible.**

This Equality & Diversity Policy is underpinned by the Equal opportunities policies and Codes of Conduct (for Board Members) and WALK Code of Behaviour Policy (for Staff) already embedded in WALK's structure. WALK will ensure that the principles of employment equality are applied to recruitment, promotion, training, career development and to all terms and conditions of employment.

5. Monitoring and review of this Policy:

The Equality and Diversity Policy will be reviewed periodically to reflect legal standards, government policy and practice and will, ideally, be reviewed annually. The review will evaluate the effective operation of this policy and improve existing practices and procedures where inequalities have been found or alleged to exist.