

## **Irish Writers Centre Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement 2020**

As the only national organisation for writers across all genres on the island, we believe in an inclusive society where writers are valued and supported so that literature can thrive and enrich our lives. We commit to remove barriers to arts participation and engagement in literature as an art form. It is a constitutional aim of the IWC: 'To promote, encourage and facilitate the participation of the disabled and socially disadvantaged in writing and literature'.

As a publicly-funded organisation, we commit to take positive policy measures to promote equality of opportunity, access and outcomes for all those living in Ireland regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community, as well as socio-economic background. We acknowledge in particular an absence of Black, people of colour, Traveller, Roma and working-class representation in the literature world in Ireland. We commit to identifying our own shortcomings and blind spots. We will prioritise anti-racism research and training, and examine the ways in which the Irish Writers Centre can meet the needs of marginalised writers through our work.

We will play our part in addressing some of the structural barriers to access that exist within literature in Ireland as part of an external cross-sector mobilization umbrella group with Words Ireland. We commit to working with Words Ireland to research the current participation of minority groups in writing and the literature sector, to develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy and a sector-wide EDI 'Pledge' or 'Charter'.

We will continue to critically reflect on our programmes, our physical spaces and our actions, and work to identify and confront racism and unconscious bias.

Actions in this regard in 2020-21 include:

- In 2020 we commenced an internal review process to redress barriers to accessing our activities.
- In September 2020 we piloted a creative writing course bursary scheme for writers from NI and writing as Gaeilge, from underrepresented backgrounds.
- In 2021 we will continue to roll out a number of changes identified to widen access to IWC programmes. All our artist calls now include wording that actively welcomes applications from under-represented demographics. We will continue to offer free entry for writers from underrepresented groups to Novel Fair and similar professional development programmes, to remove the barrier that the entry fee may pose to some writers.
- For 2021, support of the costs of 100 course places per year for writers from ROI, 40 from NI, and 12 for writers of the Irish language, will be awarded twice a year. The scheme will target participants from marginalised groups currently under-represented in literature: Black people; people of colour; people with disabilities, and people from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. We will do this in tandem with external Words Ireland support and internal inclusion and diversity training with the assistance of Capacity Building funding.
- Commit to agreeing and adopting an IWC EDI policy and providing services in a non-tokenistic way, with inclusion as a central tenet of our provision.

Revised 14 December 2020.