



Irish Writers Centre Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

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. For over 30 years the Irish Writers Centre has acknowledged and uplifted those with the courage and compulsion to write by providing opportunities for them to develop their skills, advance their ambitions and join a vibrant and diverse community of people who share their passion and purpose. We do so because we believe in the power of writing to create understanding and bring enjoyment to our world today and to imagine what it might become.

The Irish Writers Centre is committed to the principles and practices of equality, diversity and inclusion. As a publicly-funded organisation, we are committed to taking 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 remain committed to identifying our own shortcomings and blind spots. We will continue to 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 are committed to providing services in a non-tokenistic way, with inclusion as a central tenet of our provision and to regular training to help our team embed accessibility, diversity and inclusion in our practice.

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 mobilisation umbrella group with Words Ireland. We commit to continuing our work 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 to adopt a sector-wide EDI 'Charter'.

We will continue to break down real and perceived barriers to writing and to engagement with us, increasing accessibility and ensuring equality of opportunity. 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.

To date we have pursued a range of actions, with the aim of making activities more accessible and which include:



- In 2020 we commenced an internal review process to redress barriers to accessing our activities, and have since rolled out a number of changes identified to widen access to IWC programmes. All our artist calls now include wording that actively welcomes applications from underrepresented 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 entry fees pose to some writers.
- In 2021 our creative writing course bursary schemes covered the costs of 150+ bursaries giving free access to courses using a light touch application process to encourage new entrants, with separate rounds of bursaries directed towards writers from ROI, those from NI and those writing as Gaeilge. We commit to continuing the provision of course bursaries in 2022 targeting participants from marginalised groups currently underrepresented in literature, including Black people, people of colour, people with disabilities, and people from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.
- We piloted an access programme targeting Dublin writers in disadvantaged areas entitled Mentor/Member Duo Programme 2021 which we hope to continue in to 2022 with the support of Dublin City Council.
- With Words of Colour Productions (UK) we developed and piloted our first international access programme entitled UpLift: Young Leaders of Colour in Literature Initiative. Supported by the British Council (UK), UpLift will provide workshops on arts leadership through creative practice to 12 young arts practitioners of colour, as well as mentoring sessions with experienced arts professionals to two selected participants.
- Remote delivery has enabled access to those wishing to attend an activity who were previously excluded due to geography, travel costs, child care or caring responsibilities and disabilities. We are piloting an asynchronous course as a new model of practice and access.
- In 2021, the IWC appointed 3 new team/Board members of colour, to join the Director who is of MENA origin, as welcome diverse members of the IWC team and Board.

Changes to this statement

This statement was updated in January 2022.