



## **Irish Writers Centre Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy & Action Plan 2024-2028**

### **About the Irish Writers Centre**

As the leading support and development organisation for writers in Ireland since 1991, the Irish Writers Centre carries out its work, online and in-person, on an all-island basis. We work with writers of all types and talents, and actively encourage writers from all communities to engage in creative writing. We provide many ways and means for them to develop their skill, advance their ambitions and join a vibrant and diverse community of people who share their passion and purpose. We support writers through an annual programme of development opportunities, residencies, mentoring, resources, creative writing courses and events.

### **About this policy**

In 2021, the IWC published its first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Statement. This served the dual purpose of i) voicing our commitment to increasing equality of access and opportunity throughout the IWC, and ii) outlining a course of action that would ensure these principles be integrated into the day-to-day running of the organisation. This was followed by a policy, released in 2023, in which we refined our commitments down to three core pledges:

- A) Create stimulus opportunities that encourage and enable all people from underrepresented groups to explore writing,
- B) Ensure that IWC writers of the future will be more representative of the community that surrounds us in all its diversity across the island of Ireland.

- C) Continue to be welcoming and inclusive and make changes until EDI practices become literally part of our DNA as an organisation. We will develop a board, team and facilitators who are representative of the community around us and places and spaces that best enable our work across the island of Ireland

These commitments continue to govern our programming decisions and serve as the basis for the EDI action plan featured within this document.

During the period (2021-23), we also coordinated a number of new programming measures to ensure that these three core pledges were put into action. These included:

- An all-island course bursary scheme offering low-income writers free access to paid creative writing courses.
- An increase in remote delivery to enable those who, whether due to geography, travel costs, childcare, caring responsibilities and/or physical disabilities, may not be able to attend our in-person courses, events and development programmes.
- An annual allotment of twenty free submissions to the Novel Fair literary competition to writers from backgrounds typically underrepresented in Irish literature.
- Foundation Programme: A four-month long development programme aimed at supporting writers living in the Dublin City area from underrepresented backgrounds as they take their first steps towards publication.
- Mentor/Member Duo Programme: A one-to-one mentoring and IWC associate membership package for emerging writers from underrepresented backgrounds living in the Dublin City area.
- Lacuna Bursary: A one-week residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre for an emerging writer from an underrepresented background.
- New Irish Communities: A writing group, founded in 2013, with the aim of providing a creative writing space for all those for whom English is not their first language.
- Uplift: An international access programme developed with Words of Colour Productions (UK) that provided workshops on arts leadership to 12 young arts practitioners of colour, as well as mentoring sessions with experienced arts professionals to two selected participants.

With this, our second policy, we have updated our commitments in light of our activities to date, and here offer a renewed plan of action spanning the next five years, namely 2024 - 2028.

We believe it is important that our commitments are realistic and ambitious and view these developments not as a journey towards a fixed destination but as an open-ended process towards becoming a more inclusive and equitable organisation.

In addition to feedback collected from members of our board and staff, this policy has been developed with reference to a range of relevant literature policy papers and official sources including the Arts Council’s Equality, Human Rights & Diversity Policy & Strategy (2019), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit (2022), and EDI Implementation Plan (2023), the Equal Status Acts (2000-2018) and the Employment Equality Acts (1998 and 2015). In keeping with their recommendations, this policy recognises the nine protected grounds outlined under Irish legislation (i.e. gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community) in addition to a tenth ground (socio-economic status). It also recognises the evolving nature of these categories – particularly that of disability – in addition to the intersectional nature of these identities.

### **Statement of Intent**

The Irish Writers Centre is keenly aware of the systemic barriers that inhibit people from pursuing writing as a vocation across the island of Ireland and is committed to fostering a more welcoming and inclusive environment in which writers are free to make work to the best of their ability.

As an organisation, we believe in equality of access and opportunity for all. This extends from the writers we employ to the individuals who partake of our services, and is reflected in Goal 2 of our five-year strategy, i.e. to ‘[e]nhance opportunities for people across all communities to explore and participate in creative writing’. We recognise this commitment as essential to the future and longevity of our organisation and are committed to taking positive policy and programming measures to ensure that this is made a reality.

We believe that the cultivation of a vibrant, contemporary literature sector is essential to a nation’s character, and recognise that, as things stand, Ireland’s literary community is not representative of its diverse population. We are committed to creating opportunities – through our course programme, mentoring service, and through the various types of professional development we offer – that will aid writers who have not previously had access to such supports to pursue writing as a vocation. In particular, we are committed to supporting and elevating writers from backgrounds currently underrepresented in Irish literature.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

The implementation of this EDI policy and action plan is the responsibility of all IWC staff and board members. Matters relating to its implementation will be discussed at staff meetings and reviewed at board meetings. Monitoring responsibilities shall lie with the CEO ([mags@irishwriterscentre.ie](mailto:mags@irishwriterscentre.ie))

This policy will be reviewed annually. A full evaluation of its outcomes will be undertaken at the end of its lifespan (i.e. 2028).

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### **Pledges**

The Irish Writers Centre is committed to ensuring equality of access and opportunity to all those who interact with it, whether as a user of its services or a member of its staff. To accomplish this, in addition to the three earlier core pledges we commit to:

- Create opportunities that encourage and enable all people from underrepresented groups to explore writing.
- Foster a welcoming environment, both in our building and online, and make inclusive practices an inherent part of our organisation.
- Ensure that the IWC writers of the future will be more representative of the diverse community across the island of Ireland.

Pledge	Actions	Timeline
<p><b>Create opportunities that encourage and enable people from underrepresented groups to explore writing.</b></p>	<p>Develop currently existing programmes to involve more writers from underrepresented backgrounds, e.g. increase the number of participants on the Lacuna and Kylemore Residencies, designate places on Northern Soul Roadshow.</p>	<p>2024-28</p>
	<p>Expand the capacity of our free course bursary and membership schemes to include more writers from underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>2024-25</p>
	<p>Create new development programmes to provide individuals from underrepresented backgrounds with access to creative writing supports</p>	<p>2024-28</p>
<p><b>Foster a welcoming environment, both in our building and online, and make inclusive practices an inherent part of our organisation.</b></p>	<p>Encourage applications from writers from underrepresented backgrounds in all submission calls and hiring notices.</p>	<p>2024-28</p>
	<p>Re-examine the wording of submissions calls and hiring notices to ensure that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds are made to feel welcome to apply.</p>	<p>2024-25</p>
	<p>Review our social media channels and website to ensure that accessibility is prioritised in both their design and messaging.</p>	<p>2024-26</p>

Pledge	Actions	Timeline
<b>Foster a welcoming environment, both in our building and online, and make inclusive practices an inherent part of our organisation (cont.)</b>	Organise programmes and events outside of Dublin to ensure a wider community of writers can avail themselves of our services.	2024-28
	Host regular Open Days to ensure writers unfamiliar with the IWC's activities are made to feel welcome in our building.	2024-28
	Host partner events in external, fully accessible premises while we explore options relating to the accessibility of our building on Parnell Square.	2024-28
	Foster new connections with organisations working with writers from underrepresented backgrounds, e.g. Host editions of our Climate Writing Group in collaboration with Chime: The National Charity for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People.	2024-28

Pledge	Actions	Timeline
<p><b>Ensure that IWC writers of the future will be representative of the diverse community across the island of Ireland.</b></p>	<p>Encourage writers from underrepresented groups to avail of Irish Writers Centre supports and initiatives</p>	<p>2024-28</p>
	<p>Run our New Irish Communities programme offering creative writing supports to writers for whom English is not their first language.</p>	<p>2024-26</p>
	<p>Increase the number of writers from underrepresented groups employed as mentors and/or judges on our programmes and as course facilitators.</p>	<p>2024-28</p>
	<p>Create new opportunities that ensure writers from underrepresented backgrounds are supported in their pursuit of a long-term career in writing, e.g. Initiate a mentor-the-mentor programme through which mid-career writers gain experience mentoring less experienced writers.</p>	<p>2024-28</p>