



Irish Writers Centre

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy & Plan

As the leading resource 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.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

In 2021, the Irish Writers Centre published its first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Statement. This served the dual purpose of a) voicing our commitment to increasing equality of access and opportunity throughout the Irish Writers Centre, and b) 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 Irish Writers Centre 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.

We believe it is important that our commitments are realistic and ambitious, and we 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.

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

- **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 Irish Writers Centre 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.
- **Uplift:** An international access programme developed with Words of Colour Productions (UK) that provided workshops on arts leadership to 12 young arts practitioners from the global majority, as well as mentoring sessions with experienced arts professionals to two selected participants.

The current initiatives coordinated by the Irish Writers Centre to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion in our organisation, our programmes and in the people that we serve include:

- **New Irish Communities:** founded in 2013 is an annual series of creative writing sessions for non-native speakers to explore creative writing in English. Participants meet new writers, share their stories and take part in creative writing exercises in a warm and supportive environment.
- **The Global Majority:** in 2026 we will expand the New Irish Communities programme to include writers from Global Majority communities. Over the course of 8 months, we will offer 6 NIC writing sessions, 3 facilitated writing workshops, and a monthly space provided for their own writing group, and an end-of-year showcase for participants. Melatu Uche Okorie and Nandi Jola will facilitate the first workshop writing sessions aimed at non-Irish writers, often including asylum seekers, refugees and former minority groups now recognised as the Global Majority.
- **Writing Community at Irish Writers Centre:** Following on from 2025's partnership with Frustrated Writers Group and their series of in-house artist talks, our aim for 2026 is to

expand this community connection with FWG and other similar writing groups including Off the Scéal (multilingual organisation), expanding our connection with writers and audiences of varying ages, diversities and interests.

- 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.
- A course bursary scheme offering low-income writers free access to paid creative writing courses.
- An annual allotment of ten free submissions to the International Debut Novel Competition to writers from backgrounds typically underrepresented in Irish literature.
- Writing group initiatives: In 2026, the Irish Writers Centre is introducing new initiatives to encourage people from the Black community and people from the LGBTQI+ community to join writing groups at the Centre.

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 in 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. We are particularly 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 Irish Writers Centre staff and board members. Matters relating to its implementation will be discussed at staff meetings and reviewed at board meetings.

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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan

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:

Creating opportunities that encourage and enable all people from underrepresented groups to explore writing by:

- Developing current existing programmes to involve more writers from underrepresented backgrounds,
- Expanding the capacity of our free course bursary and membership schemes to include more writers from underrepresented groups.
- Creating new development programmes to provide individuals from underrepresented backgrounds with access to creative writing supports.

Foster a welcoming environment, both in our building and online, and make inclusive practices an inherent part of our organisation by:

- Encouraging applications from writers from underrepresented backgrounds in all submission calls and hiring notices
- Re-examining the wording of submissions calls and hiring notices to ensure that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds are made to feel welcome to apply.
- Reviewing our social media channels and website to ensure that accessibility is prioritised in both their design and messaging.
- Organising programmes and events outside Dublin to ensure a wider community of writers can avail themselves of our services.
- Hosting regular Open Days to ensure writers unfamiliar with the Irish Writers Centre's activities are made to feel welcome in our building.
- Hosting partner events in external, fully accessible premises while we explore options relating to the accessibility of our building on Parnell Square.
- Fostering 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.

Ensure that the Irish Writers Centre writers of the future will be more representative of the diverse community across the island of Ireland.

- Encouraging writers from underrepresented groups to avail of Irish Writers Centre supports and initiatives.
- Running our New Irish Communities programme offering creative writing supports to writers for whom English is not their first language
- Increasing the number of writers from underrepresented groups employed as mentors and/or judges on our programmes and as course facilitators.
- Creating 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.

Policy details

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy & Plan is reviewed annually. It was last reviewed in March 2026.