

## Gender Equality Policy

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*Note: it is anticipated that this document will be superseded by the HSE's National Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy, which is expected to be finalised in late 2022.*

### **Purpose of document:**

The purpose of this document is to set out the NCCP's gender equality policy as it relates to the work of the NCCP and for the purposes of the requirements for participation in cancer research projects under Horizon Europe [1].

### **The role of the NCCP:**

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) is a Directorate of the Health Service Executive (HSE). The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) is responsible for ensuring that relevant elements of cancer policy, as set out in the National Cancer Strategies are delivered to the maximum extent, with the goal of achieving better outcomes for patients. The NCCP works with partners in the Health Service Executive (HSE), Department of Health, health service providers and other stakeholders to prevent cancer, treat cancer and increase survival and quality of life for those who develop cancer, by converting the knowledge gained through research, surveillance and outcome evaluation into strategies and actions.

### **Context:**

The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004 apply to those who provide a wide range of services, including health, and those who use the services. The Acts aim to promote equality of opportunity and prohibit particular forms of discrimination across nine grounds of: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Travelling community [2]. Specifically in relation to gender in Ireland, the goal of the National Women and Girls Strategy 2017-2020 [3] is an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life. The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty [4] places a statutory obligation on public bodies in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. Section 42(1) requires public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of staff and people availing of their services. This policy is one element of the NCCP's aims to meet that duty and will be further bolstered by implementation of the HSE's National Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy, when available.

### **Work-life balance and organisational culture:**

In line with the HSE Corporate Plan [6], the NCCP is committed to fostering an environment for people to excel in their work by supporting a healthy work life balance, encouraging staff to raise concerns and ideas and develop practices that support staff retention. The HSE's policies on parental leave, flexible working and related considerations are applicable.

The terms and conditions of employment, revised in 2017 [7], details HSE policies available to all HSE NCCP staff members to include:-

- Annual Leave including public holiday leave
- Flexible Working Scheme
- Maternity Leave including Health & Safety Leave

- Breastfeeding breaks on return to work after maternity Leave
- Adoptive Leave
- Paternity leave
- Parental Leave
- Parents Leave - as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022
- Force Majeure Leave
- Carers Leave
- Compassionate Leave
- Career Break Leave
- Special Leave for marriage
- Special Leave with nominal pay
- Shorter Working Year Scheme
- Jury Service
- Leave for deployment with Rapid Response Corp
- Reserve Defence Forces Leave
- Special Leave with pay to volunteer in exceptional humanitarian crisis
- HSE Sick Leave Scheme
- Health & Well Being – Self Occupational Health referral,
- Employee Assistance Programme

As mentioned above, the HSE is currently finalising its National Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy, which is expected to provide more specific information and guidance around policies and systems aimed at promoting equality, including gender equality in organisational culture.

**Gender balance in leadership and decision-making:**

Gender is a consideration in the prioritisation of the work of the NCCP, in line with the National Cancer Strategy, for equity of access to cancer services for the entire population and the avoidance of discrimination on any grounds. Leadership and decision-making for cancer services is distributed amongst several stakeholders, particularly the NCCP, the wider HSE and the Department of Health. Internally, within the NCCP promotes gender balance in its leadership positions on the NCCP Executive Management Team. Currently, the gender balance on the Executive Management Team is 55% female/45% male (n=9). In the establishment of committees, consideration is given to a range of factors, including geographical balance, multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder balance, as well as gender balance. In addition, the NCCP will work with partners and stakeholders to promote the principles of equality, diversity and integration, including in relation to gender, in respect of relevant cancer research activities.

**Gender equality in recruitment and career progression:**

The HSE recognises and values the diversity of all employees and is committed to developing working practices which will allow every Employee to contribute his or her best, regardless of race, gender, family status, membership of travellers' community, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability or sexual orientation [8].

The HSE is an equality opportunities employer. Gender is a consideration in the convening of all NCCP interview boards (Chair and expert members), to order to ensure an appropriate gender balance. In addition, all members of interview boards for NCCP positions are required to complete interview training, including modules on conscious and unconscious bias.

Appointments to positions in the Health Service Executive (NCCP) are subject to the Codes of Practice published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA). Details of the Code of Practice are available on line at [www.cpsa-online.ie](http://www.cpsa-online.ie). The Code of Practice sets out how the core principles of probity, merit, equity and fairness might be applied on a principle basis

The Code of Practice specifies the responsibilities placed on candidates who participate in recruitment campaigns. It outlines procedures in relation to requests for a review of the recruitment and selection process and review in relation to allegations of a breach of the Code of Practice. Additional information on the HSE's review process is available in the document posted with each vacancy entitled "Code of Practice, information for candidates" [9]. In addition, when purchasing online selection tools from external providers, the HSE ensures that these are proofed to avoid gender bias.

NCCP management will aim to ensure that supports for career progression for all staff are mindful of diversity and equality factors, including gender.

#### **Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content:**

The NCCP is not a research or teaching body, nor funding research a primary element of its work. The main focus of the NCCP is on implementing Government policy to enhance clinical cancer services. However, the NCCP will promote the consideration of the gender dimension in research and teaching, through its National Cancer Research Group and in its work with partners involved in research and teaching.

#### **Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment:**

The Health Service recognises the right of all employees to be treated with dignity and respect and is committed to ensuring that all employees are provided with a safe working environment which is free from all forms of bullying, sexual harassment and harassment [10]. The Dignity at Work policy covers sexual harassment and harassment as outlawed by the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2008 and workplace bullying and reflects the experiences of both employers and union representatives in dealing with complaints of bullying and harassment. The revised Dignity at Work Policy for the Health Service was produced on a partnership basis by a Working Group comprising representatives from the HSE, Voluntary Hospitals and Intellectual Disability sectors, health service unions, HSE-Employers Agency and IBEC.

An essential element to the effectiveness of the revised Dignity at Work Policy is the requirement of sufficient number of skilled employee's assigned in the NCCP as nominated and support persons to fulfil the requirements of the policy.

#### **Acknowledgements**

In addition to the documents cited in this gender equality policy, other documents that were helpful in its preparation but not specifically cited were:

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Health Research Board (2019). HRB Gender Policy <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/policies-and-principles/gender/> [Accessed 12/08/22]

PPI Ignite Network (2021). Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across the PPI Ignite Network: Our Strategy <https://ppinetwork.ie/our-work/equality-diversity-inclusion/> [Accessed 18/08/22]

## References

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- [2] HSE, "Health Services Intercultural Guide," HSE, 2022 [Accessed 12/08/22].
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- [5] HSE, "HSE Corporate Plan 2021-2024," HSE, 2021.
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- [10] DOH, "Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Working Group Terms of Reference," [personal communication], 2022.
- [11] Irish Human Rights and Equality Committee. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/faqs-on-the-duty/>. [Accessed October 2022].