

Programme of work 2003/2004

OBJECTIVE

Ensure that in the allocation of houses to persons on Wicklow County Council's waiting list, that the rights of the specific groups (nine grounds) as detailed in the Equal Status Act 2000, are safeguarded and respected.

SPECIFIC ACTION

Equality proofing of:

- Housing Application Form
- Scheme of Letting Priorities as operated by Wicklow County Council

OBJECTIVE

That training opportunities focusing on equality issues, will be made available to all staff within the Housing Section

SPECIFIC ACTION

- Provide Equality Awareness training sessions for staff .
- Explore possibility of this training being extended to other parties who have role in housing allocation process

OBJECTIVE

That the lessons learned as a result of developing this policy are recorded and shared with other sections of Wicklow County Council with a view to similar equality based initiatives happening in other sections

SPECIFIC ACTION

- Production of a leaflet/guide, detailing in a practical, user-friendly way, the process undertaken in terms of developing an Equal Status Policy for Wicklow Co. Co.'s Housing Section

Future plans regarding the implementation of this Policy include:

- Developing a communications strategy which allows for consumer feedback from local organisations representing the nine grounds regarding the service being delivered by Wicklow County Council's Housing Section
- Developing appropriate systems for the collection of data which would facilitate monitoring / tracking across the nine grounds in terms of service delivery
- The putting in place of processes and procedures to deal with complaints of discrimination or harassment as detailed in the Equal Status Act 2000



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This leaflet is available in a variety of formats on request

& can be accessed on www.wicklow.ie

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EQUAL STATUS POLICY FOR HOUSING SECTION

Wicklow County Council

1. Statement of Policy

The Housing Section of Wicklow County Council is committed to providing an equality focused service to all of its customers. To ensure that this service is free from all forms of discrimination, (direct, indirect and by association) and harassment (as per the Equal Status Act 2000) the Housing Section has developed an Equal Status Policy. This Policy seeks to ensure that all housing services, provided by Wicklow County Council, are delivered from an equality perspective. This Policy statement advocates the deployment of positive action as and when necessary and appropriate, to address any particular disadvantage or barrier experienced by any customer on any of the nine grounds as detailed in the Act.

Specifically, this policy derives from the terms of the Equal Status Act 2000 which prohibits discrimination from a service delivery perspective against the following nine grounds:

- Gender
- Marital Status
- Family Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Religious Belief
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller Community

2. Aim of the Policy

The key aims of this Policy include:

- That Wicklow County Council's Housing Section will treat all customers equally and fairly while at the same time respecting and making adjustments for individual or group differences and needs where possible.
- That the development of this Policy will meet the requirements of Social Inclusion Action 09 in Wicklow County Development Board's strategy 'Outlook'.
- That the learning emanating from the development of this Policy will ultimately be mainstreamed both internally within the Local Authority structure in Co. Wicklow and externally by the other partners on Wicklow County Development Board.

3. Scope of the Policy

Given the breadth of responsibilities of the Housing Section, it has been agreed that this Policy should set a number of achievable objectives for the 2003/04 period.

Critically, it is agreed that this Policy should as a first step focus on the scheme of Letting Priorities as operated by Wicklow County Council's Housing Section. The key stages in this process, from application by the housing client to final decision, will be tested to ensure compliance with the equality objectives as stated in the Housing Section's Equal Status Policy to ensure progress towards equality outcomes.

Where discrepancies are highlighted / identified, action will be taken to address the issues raised. Where the ability to make changes to standard procedure rests with Wicklow County Council, a commitment exists to make these changes. Where a change to standard procedure requires sanction from another body eg Health Board, Dept. of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, a commitment exists to request appropriate changes to ensure compliance with current equality legislation.

It is intended that as the learning and awareness raising increases regarding the requirements of the Equal Status Act 2000, and the establishment of equality objectives, that other core activities of the Housing Section will be cross-checked against these objectives as well as the requirements of the 2000 Act. Other service areas to be considered in time may include a selection of the following schemes (where appropriate):

- Disabled Persons Grant
- Improvement Works in view of local authority housing
- Essential Repairs Grants
- Rural Housing Schemes
- Private Site Development
- Voluntary Housing
- Tenant Purchase Scheme
- Mortgage Allowance Scheme
- Housing Loans
- Shared Ownership Scheme
- Housing Strategy
- Traveller Accommodation Programme
- Homeless Action Plan

4. Responsibility

Responsibility for the implementation of the actions in 2004 will rest with the steering committee for this initiative. The membership of this steering committee will remain internal to Wicklow County Council staff. Membership to date therefore includes nominees from senior management in the Housing Section as well as representatives from the Office of Community & Enterprise and the Social Inclusion Unit, Wicklow County Council.

The key responsibilities of this steering committee are:

- To ensure the effective and efficient implementation of this policy
- To monitor the effectiveness of this policy
- To address any issues which arise as result of the implementation of this policy
- To build the focus of the policy across other Housing service areas
- To support the development of equality objectives for the Housing Section

5. Monitoring

The monitoring / tracking system as employed by Wicklow County Development Board will be used to measure progress or otherwise in the implementation of this Equal Status Policy.

6. Review

A review of the process undertaken to date will be carried out by the steering committee on an annual basis with the first review scheduled for early 2004. Where the need arises, external input / expertise may be requested to assist in this review process