



VETERINARY IRELAND

POLICY DOCUMENT
ON
EQUALITY

2018

AS RATIFIED BY
VETERINARY IRELAND NATIONAL COUNCIL
22nd NOVEMBER 2018



Veterinary Ireland Policy Document on Equality

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Summary

Veterinary Ireland's aim is to eliminate discrimination in all aspects of employment within the Irish Veterinary Profession by 2024.

Veterinary Ireland calls on all employers of veterinary professionals to pay specific attention to promote and maintain equality in terms of gender, family status and age, to ensure equality in terms of pay and remuneration, equality in access to training and promotion, and the exclusion of any harassment, including sexual harassment, within the Irish Veterinary Profession.

In achieving these aims:

- Veterinary Ireland calls on all employers of veterinary professionals to implement and follow adequate policies and procedures to promote and maintain equality and to control and eliminate all discrimination, especially on the 9 grounds of Gender, Civil Status, Family Status, Sexual Orientation, Religion, Age, Disability, Race and Membership of the Traveller Community.**
- Veterinary Ireland calls on all employers of veterinary professionals to ensure that adequate and robust recruitment and selection policies and procedures are in place, in order to achieve a consistent approach in recruitment selection, to ensure that fair selection procedures and practices are in operation, that inappropriate discriminatory practices are not practiced, and so to comply with employment legislation and good personnel practice.**
- Veterinary Ireland calls on all employers of veterinary professionals to apply equality of pay and remuneration, as required under The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015.**
- Veterinary Ireland calls on all employers of veterinary professionals to undertake any exemptions under The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 only if legally permitted, and only on the basis of objective reasoning, which must be defensible under the Acts.**

Veterinary Ireland Policy on Equality 2018



Introduction

Veterinary Ireland, on behalf of both its employer and employee members, aims to seek the elimination of discrimination on the 9 grounds of equality within the Irish Veterinary Profession by 2024.

This aim will be pursued by Veterinary Ireland as both a Trade Union and a Trade Association, through education, information and practical assistance to its members, through articles, media releases, Continuing Veterinary Education (CVE) lectures, the provision of templates of policies and procedures to members, and the review, updating and continued promotion to all stakeholders of Veterinary Ireland policies on equality.

While Veterinary Ireland has since its inception in 2001 been providing general advice to its employer and employee members on all aspects of employment, including aspects of equality in recruitment and retention of veterinary employees, the first focussed step in eliminating discrimination in the Irish Veterinary Profession is this policy paper, proposed by the members of Veterinary Ireland's Recent Graduate Working Group (RGWG), with especial focus on eliminating perceived gender inequalities within the terms and conditions of employment of veterinary employees.

General Statement of Policy

The main aim of this policy is to eliminate discrimination in employment within the Irish Veterinary Profession by 2024.

Veterinary Ireland recognises that it is important that good employment equality practices are in operation in all workplaces where veterinary practitioners are engaged.

Veterinary Ireland therefore calls on all veterinary employers in Registered Veterinary Practices, State Sector Veterinary Service, Local Authority Veterinary Service, Education, Research and Industry to implement and follow adequate policies and procedures to promote and maintain the integrity of equality in all aspects of veterinary work, and to control and eliminate all discrimination of those employed in or by the veterinary profession in Ireland, especially on the 9 grounds as defined in **The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015:**

Gender; Civil Status; Family Status; Sexual Orientation; Religion; Age; Disability; Race and Membership of the Traveller Community.

Specific attention should be paid by veterinary employers to promote and maintain equality in terms of **gender, family status and age** in relation to **terms and conditions, pay and remuneration**, access to **training and promotion**, and the **exclusion of harassment and Sexual harassment** within the Irish Veterinary Profession.

Advice and assistance in the pursuit of these aims will be provided to Veterinary Ireland Members through Veterinary Ireland Headquarters.



Employment Equality in Ireland

Employment Equality in Ireland is governed in the main by **The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015**.

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 cover the equality aspects of employment, including access to employment, advertising positions, recruitment, equal pay and conditions, promotion, dismissal, as well as other aspects of equality in employment. The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 promotes equality, prohibits discrimination and harassment including sexual harassment, and requires that appropriate measures be put in place for those with disabilities in relation to access, recruitment, training and all activities in employment. The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 protects employees in all spheres, public and private sectors, as well as those seeking employment and training. The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 also permit employers to put in place positive measures (positive discrimination) in order to promote equal opportunities on the grounds of gender (including female employees who are pregnant or breastfeeding), as well as towards the integration into employment of those people aged over 50, those people with disabilities, or those who are members of the Traveller community.

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 outlaw discrimination in a wide range of employment and employment-related areas, including recruitment, equal pay and working conditions, training and promotion, grievance and discipline and bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. Irish legislation defines discrimination as treating one person in a less favourable way than another person, based on any one of 9 defined grounds:

- **Gender:** man, woman or transsexual;
- **Civil Status:** including single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, civil partnerships or former civil partnerships;
- **Family Status:** including being the parent of a person under 18 years, or the parent or resident primary carer of a person with a disability;
- **Sexual Orientation:** including gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual;
- **Religion:** including religious belief, background, outlook, or none;
- **Age:** any person aged 16 or over (NB: this category does not apply to a person aged under 16);
- **Disability:** including people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities, and a range of medical conditions;
- **Race:** including race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin;
- **Membership of the Traveller Community.**

Other pieces of legislation, such as the **Pensions Act 1990** (as amended) and the **Maternity Protections Acts 1994 and 2004**, cover equality within specific aspects of work and every-day life.



Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission & Workplace Relations Commission

The **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014** mandated the setting up of the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)** as Ireland's national human rights and equality institution.

The IHREC is an independent public body, accountable to the Oireachtas, with the purpose to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State. The IHREC can, at its discretion, provide legal assistance to people who wish to bring claims under Equality Legislation.

Discrimination claims under the Equality Employment Acts 1998-2015 are made through the **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)**, which investigates or mediates claims of unlawful discrimination under Irish equality legislation.

Equal Opportunities to Veterinary Employment

Veterinary Ireland recognises that the promotion of equal access to employment opportunities is of benefit to both the employer, by ensuring the widest contact with the employment market, as well as to workers and those applying for positions, in ensuring fairness and equality irrespective of a person's own circumstances

Veterinary Ireland recognises that responsibility for providing equal employment opportunities rests with all veterinary employers in Registered Veterinary Practices, State Sector Veterinary Service, Local Authority Veterinary Service, Education, Research and Industry.

Veterinary Ireland therefore calls on all veterinary employers to ensure that adequate and robust recruitment and selection policies and procedures are in place, in order to achieve a consistent approach in recruitment selection, to ensure that fair selection procedures and practices are in operation, that inappropriate discriminatory practices are not practiced, and so to comply with employment legislation and good personnel practice.

Such policies and procedures should be initiated for the recruitment and selection of external candidates, but, should the veterinary employer's business expand, shall apply equally to internal candidates applying for other positions.

The main aims of such policies and procedures should be:

- To encourage and enable good personnel practice in recruitment, selection and promotion decisions;
- To establish a set of guidelines for good recruitment and selection practice;
- To ensure that good personnel practice is explained and understood by staff.

Records of decisions taken at the selection interview stage of the recruitment process should be retained for a minimum of 12 months.



Equality Within Veterinary Employment

Veterinary Ireland recognises that responsibility for providing equality within veterinary employment rests with all veterinary employers in Registered Veterinary Practices, State Sector Veterinary Service, Local Authority Veterinary Service, Education, Research and Industry. It is also recognised that individual staff members acting on behalf of the veterinary employer **at all levels** have responsibilities in the prevention of discrimination, including acts of bullying and harassment.

The Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying in 2001 defined bullying at work as '*repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work*'.

Bullying within veterinary employment can involve people in many different work situations and at all levels, including and not exclusively:

- Practice Principal / Partner / Practice Manager to employee
- employee to Practice Principal / Partner / Practice Manager
- one employee to another (or group to group)
- customer, client or other business contact to employee
- Practice principal / Partner / Practice Manager to customer/business contact.

Harassment is legally distinct from bullying in that while bullying behaviour is not predicated on membership of any distinct group, harassment is governed by Equality legislation and is predicated on the person being a member of one of the nine categories specified in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015: **Gender; Civil Status; Family Status; Sexual Orientation; Religion; Age; Disability; Race** and **Membership of the Traveller Community**.

The Health and Safety Authority Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2007) states that both employers and employees have rights and responsibilities under the **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (as amended)**.

Employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work and not to have their safety, health or welfare put at risk through bullying by the employer, by other employees or other persons. They have a right to complain to the employer if bullied and not to be victimised for so doing, and to be represented in raising issues with the employer.

Employees are duty bound to behave and conduct themselves so as to respect the right of employers and other employees to dignity, courtesy and respect at work and the right not to be placed at risk as regards to their safety, health and welfare from bullying at work.



Employees should also cooperate by providing any relevant information when an allegation of bullying at work is being looked into whether in an informal or formal stage.

Employers have a duty to manage and conduct work activities in such a way as to prevent any improper conduct or behaviour likely to put at risk any employee's safety, health or welfare at work. The prevention of bullying must therefore be part of the management systems of a veterinary place of work. Under Section 20 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, employers are required to prepare a **Safety Statement**, based on an identification of the hazards to safety, health and welfare at the place of work, an assessment of the risks involved and setting down the preventive measures necessary to protect safety, health and welfare. Risk is the likelihood of a hazard causing harm and the extent of that harm. The employer must therefore consider if bullying at work is likely to be a hazard, the extent of risk involved and what preventive measures are necessary.

In particular, veterinary employers and their individual employees: -

- Must not themselves discriminate against other staff members or induce others to practice discrimination;
- Must ensure that their actions, in undertaking all their duties, are carried out in a non-discriminatory manner;
- Must not victimise, bully, harass, abuse or intimidate other staff members on any grounds.

Further information on this aspect of bullying and equality is available to Veterinary Ireland members through Veterinary Ireland Headquarters, or direct from the Health and Safety Authority.

Equality of Pay Within Veterinary Employment

Equal pay for like work is enshrined in all employee's contracts of employment, and equal pay for like work under the 9 grounds of equality is covered in The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015.

Like work is work that

- is performed in the same or similar conditions as another employee, or
- is interchangeable with the work of another employee, or
- is of equal value to the work performed by another employee.

Accordingly, Veterinary Ireland calls on all veterinary employers in Registered Veterinary Practices, State Sector Veterinary Service, Local Authority Veterinary Service, Education, Research and Industry to apply equality of pay and remuneration, as required under The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015.



Exemptions to the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 allow for employees to be treated differently (including positive discrimination) in certain circumstances, in general and within the 9 grounds specified within the Acts.

Such examples include:

- capacity and competence, especially where safety, health and welfare may be of concern;
- the holding of educational, technical or professional qualifications;
- terms and conditions specific to Officers or servants (employees) of the State;
- reasonable accommodations to those with disabilities;
- reasonable accommodations for female employees who are pregnant or breastfeeding;
- or certain terms and conditions with regards to age, recruitment and retirement.

Should any veterinary employer consider utilising any of these exemptions under the Acts, then expert advice should be sought.

In any case, Veterinary Ireland calls on all veterinary employers in Registered Veterinary Practices, State Sector Veterinary Service, Local Authority Veterinary Service, Education, Research and Industry to undertake such exemptions only if legally permitted, and only on the basis of objective reasoning, which must be defensible under the Acts.

Equality Within Veterinary Ireland

Veterinary Ireland is itself an equal opportunities employer and organisation, and will prevent discrimination of its members, Officers and employees, particularly on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the travelling community.

As well as individual and collective terms and conditions for Veterinary Ireland Headquarters Staff, the Constitution and Rules of Veterinary Ireland set out the existing policies of the organisation with regards to equality, and specifically harassment and sexual harassment, as contained in the **Veterinary Ireland Bye-Law on Dignity and Conduct with the Organisation**, which forms part of the Veterinary Ireland Constitution and Rules.



References

(Correct as of 19 November 2018)

Legislation:

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/21/enacted/en/html>

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (as amended)

<http://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2005/act/10/front/revised/en/html>

The Pensions Act 1990 (as amended)

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1990/act/25/enacted/en/html?q=Pensions+Act+1990>

The Maternity Protections Acts 1994 and 2004

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1994/act/34/enacted/en/html>

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/enacted/en/html>

Documents:

Health and Safety Authority Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2007)

www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Occupational_Health/CoP_Bullying.pdf

Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (2001)

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Occupational_Health/Report_of_the_Task_Force_on_the_Prevention_of_Workplace_Bullying.html

Veterinary Ireland Constitution and Rules

Website: www.veterinaryireland.ie

Veterinary Ireland Bye-Law on Dignity and Conduct with the Organisation

Website: www.veterinaryireland.ie

Useful Websites:

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission: Website: www.ihrec.ie

Workplace Relations Commission: Website: www.workplacerelations.ie

Health and Safety Authority: Website: www.hsa.ie

Pensions Authority: Website: www.pensionsauthority.ie

Citizens Information: Website: www.citizensinformation.ie

Union Connect (ICTU) - Rights at Work: Website: www.unionconnect.ie/rights

Assistance in the formulation of Equal Opportunities Recruitment and Selection Policies and Procedures can be provided to Veterinary Ireland Members through **Veterinary Ireland Headquarters – 01-457-7976 / HQ@vetireland.ie**.



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