



National Policy National Procedure National Protocol National Guideline
 National Clinical Guideline

HSE National Procedure for the Management of the DEI Enquiry Service

DOCUMENT GOVERNANCE ¹

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Short summary:
The HSE DEI Enquiry Service fosters an inclusive workplace and provides guidance on DEI matters. This SOP outlines how the DEI team manages and responds to enquiries.
Description:
The HSE DEI Enquiry Service is dedicated to promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion across the workforce. Our goal is to foster a positive, inclusive workplace where all employees feel safe, respected, and valued.
This SOP details the process for managing, reporting, and responding to DEI-related enquiries from HSE managers, employees (including prospective and former employees), HR personnel, and external organisations. The service provides guidance, information, and resources to support inclusive policies, practices, and initiatives.

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1.0 Planning

1.1 Overview

This SOP outlines the procedure for managing, recording, and responding to diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) enquiries from HSE employees, managers, HR personnel and external organisations. The DEI team ensures consistent, high-quality, and timely responses while tracking trends and providing reporting insights.

1.2 Purpose

The HSE DEI Enquiry Service is dedicated to promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion across the workforce. Our goal is to foster a positive, inclusive workplace where all employees feel safe, respected, and valued.

This SOP details the process for managing, reporting, and responding to DEI-related enquiries from HSE managers, employees; including prospective and former employees, HR personnel, and external organisations. The service provides guidance, information, and resources to support inclusive policies, practices, and initiatives.

Enquiries may be received via the dedicated DEI email address, other central HSE email accounts, individual team member emails, or telephone.

1.3 Scope

This SOP applies to:

- Current, former, and prospective HSE employees.
- HSE managers and / or HR personnel seeking DEI guidance.
- External organisations engaging with the HSE on DEI matters.
- Enquiries related to workplace DEI matters only (excludes service delivery queries).

1.3.1 Target users

- Members of the HSE DEI team.
- Employees from the wider Capability and Leadership department assisting with employee network activities.

1.3.2 Target population

- Full-time and part-time HSE employees across all Regional Health Areas.
- Section 38/39 organisations
- HSE funded agencies
- Agency workers
- Prospective employees
- Former employees who have left the HSE
- Other External organisations such as Media, Universities other National Health Services

1.4 Objectives

- Provide a transparent, quality assured and accountable approach to managing DEI enquiries.
- Ensure clear categorisation, recording, and reporting of enquiries.
- Support compliance with relevant legislation and HSE policies.

1.5 Outcome(s)

This SOP aims to enhance the management and delivery of the DEI Enquiry Service, promoting a positive, equitable, and inclusive workplace culture where all employees, especially those with diverse characteristics, feel valued and respected.

Outcomes include:

- Ensures all DEI-related concerns are addressed consistently and fairly.
- Builds trust among employees and managers in the DEI process.
- Enhances organisational accountability in handling DEI matters.
- Enables accurate tracking and trend analysis of DEI concerns.
- Facilitates informed decision-making and targeted interventions.
- Improves efficiency in handling DEI-related queries.
- Aligns organisational practices with HSE, statutory and regulatory DEI requirements.
- Mitigates risks related to non-compliance and potential legal challenges.
- Reinforces the HSE's commitment to a fair and inclusive workplace.

1.6 Disclosure of interests

No conflicts of interest relate to this SOP.

1.7 Rationale / alignment with HSE national priorities

- This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) supports the implementation of the of the HSE's [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2027](#).
- This SOP aligns with the [HSE People Strategy 2025–2027](#), which sets out the HSE's strategic themes and commitments to workforce development in support of the HSE Corporate Plan and in creating a strong culture of performance and delivery. In particular, it reflects **Theme 3: Foster a diverse and inclusive culture**, which focuses on valuing diversity and building an inclusive workforce where all staff can contribute, thrive, and better meet the needs of our service users.
- This SOP is also in line with the [HSE Dignity at Work Policy](#) which sets out how the organisation's commitment to creating and maintaining a workplace where all employees are treated with dignity and respect.
- Additionally, this document follows the principles outlined in [How to Develop HSE National Policies, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines: A Practical Guide 2023](#), ensuring a clear and consistent approach to developing policies and procedures.

1.8 Supporting evidence

1.8.1 Relevant legislation:

- The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2021
- The Disability Act 2005
- The Human Rights & Equality Commission Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018

The legislation above details the legal duties related to DEI that the HSE and other public bodies must uphold, and places a positive duty on public bodies to have regard for the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect Human Rights, in their day-to-day work.

1.8.2 Related 3PGs:

- How to Develop HSE National Policies, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines: A Practical Guide 2023
- Dignity at Work Policy for the Health Service
- HSE Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure
- HSE Guidelines on Terms and Conditions of Employment (2024)
- HSE National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Work-Related Stress
- HSE IT Policies & Standards

2.0 Methodology

The content in this SOP was developed to align with best practice in developing guidelines, as outlined in How to Develop HSE National Policies, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines: A Practical Guide 2023.

2.1 List of key questions this National 3PG will answer

This SOP aims to answer the following questions:

- Where should DEI-related enquiries be directed?
- How should DEI-related enquiries be handled efficiently and consistently?
- How is the quality and accuracy of responses assured?
- What are the monitoring and reporting mechanisms for DEI enquiries?

2.2 Describe and document the evidence search

The DEI team conducted a review of management and governance structures for Enquiry Services in other public and private sector organisations. This review included:

- A search of publicly available information on Enquiry Services in public and private sector bodies.
- Discussions with individuals who have expertise in establishing and managing Enquiry Services.
- Analysis of the DEI teams' previous knowledge and expertise of Enquiry Services in other organisations, including GDPR considerations.

2.3 Describe the method of screening and evidence appraisal

The DEI team reviewed all available evidence and agreed upon a process to manage the DEI Enquiry Service.

2.4 Attach any copyright or permissions sought

No copyright or permissions are required in relation to this document.

3.0 Procedure

3.1 Enquiry Management Process

Receipt of Enquiry

- Enquiries can be submitted via the dedicated email: diversity.HR@hse.ie
- Enquiries may also be received through DEI team members' email, phone calls, or meetings.

Acknowledgement

- All enquiries received via the DEI Inbox are sent an auto response; detailing anticipated response times and signposting to spotlighted DEI resources and activities and / or campaigns. (See [Appendix 8](#))
- All enquiries should be acknowledged within three working days.
- All enquiry acknowledgements, including those received through other channels must cc diversity.HR@hse.ie for tracking and recording purposes.

Logging and Categorisation

- Enquiries are categorised by colour in the Inbox to signify enquiry owner.
- Enquiries are logged in the DEI Enquiries Log under relevant categories (e.g., Reasonable Accommodation, Training, Recruitment). (See [Appendix 9](#))
- Enquiries are marked Open until resolved, unless there has been no response for a period of one month.

Response and Resolution

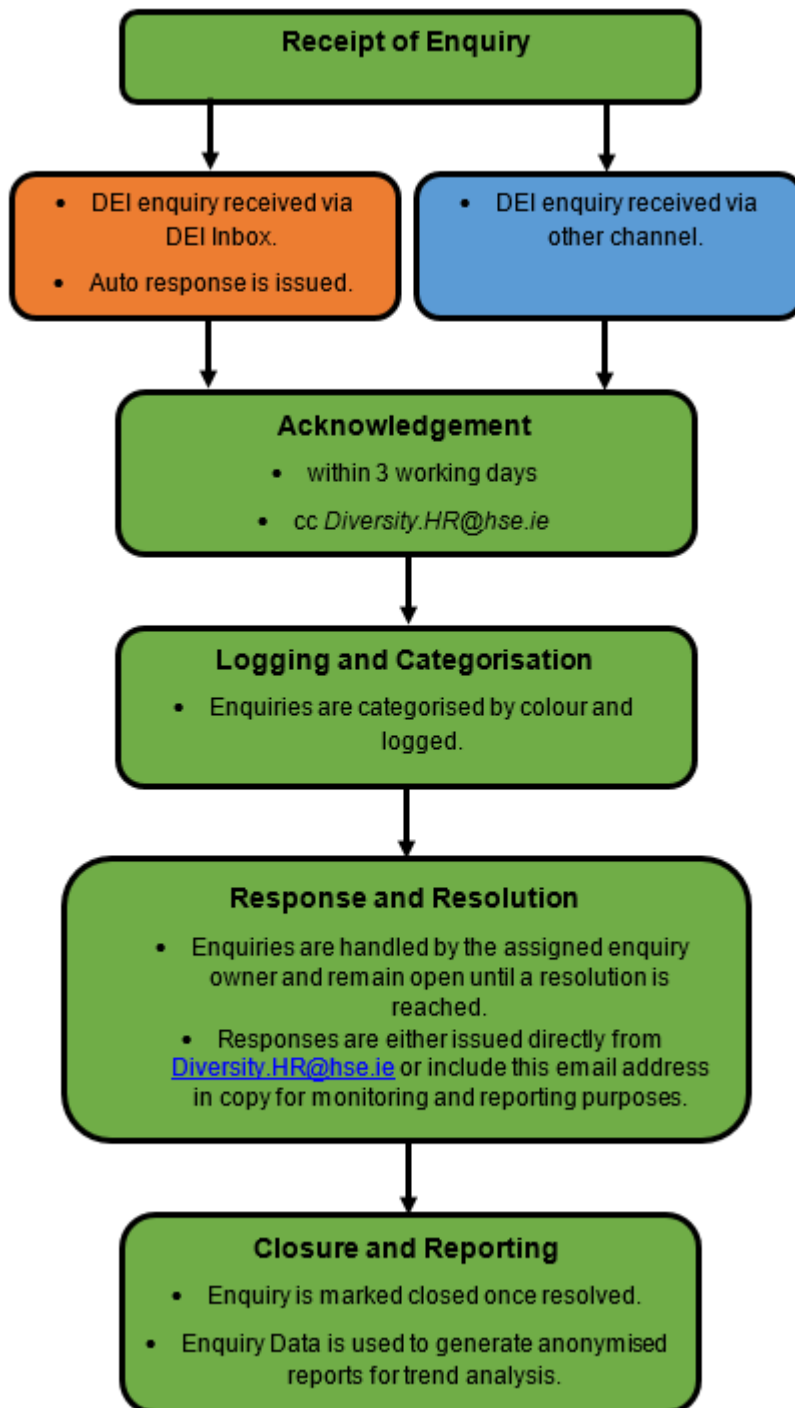
- The DEI team provides an initial response, offering guidance or forwarding to the relevant department.
- All Enquiry responses, including those received through other channels must cc diversity.HR@hse.ie for tracking and recording purposes.

- If further actions are required, the case remains Open until final resolution or until there is no response for a month.

Closure and Reporting

- Once resolved, the enquiry is marked Closed, summarised in the Enquiries Log and moved to the relevant "Closed" inbox sub-folder.
- Anonymised monthly and annual national reports, as well as quarterly regional reports on DEI enquiries, are generated for trend analysis.

3.2 Enquiry Management Process Flowchart



3.3 Specific roles and responsibilities

The DEI Enquiry Service is:

- Accountable to the Chief People Officer and Assistant National Director Capability & Leadership
- Responsibility of the National Lead, Diversity Equality and Inclusion
- Mangaged by the DEI Officer
- With contributions from all DEI Team members on relevant topics.

3.4 GDPR & Confidentiality

The following principles apply:

- The Enquiry Service complies with HSE IT Policies and Standards.
- Personal and sensitive data should be minimised and anonymised where possible.
- The DEI Enquiry Log must not contain personally identifiable information (PII) unless essential for case resolution.
- Access to information is restricted to authorised DEI team members only.
- Confidentiality must be maintained to protect employees' privacy and prevent unauthorised disclosure.
- In highly sensitive cases, the placeholder "XX" will replace PII to ensure anonymity.
- The DEI Enquiry Log (Master Version) must be stored securely on the DEI\$ Network Drive.
- The DEI Enquiry Archive must be deleted in line with GDPR retention guidelines, such as removing PII after six years.
- **Limits of Confidentiality:** While every effort is made to maintain confidentiality, there are circumstances where information may need to be shared. If a concern indicates a serious risk to health, safety, or well-being; including potential harm to the individual or others, the DEI Team has a duty of care to escalate the matter appropriately in line with HSE policies and legal obligations.

3.5 Quality Assurance and Risk Assessment

The following principles apply:

- **Standardised Guidance and Resources:** Responses are informed by up-to-date DEI policies, legislation, and best practices to ensure consistency and accuracy.

- **Review, Validation and Informal Escalation Process:** Complex or sensitive enquiries are reviewed by senior DEI team members or subject matter experts before a response is issued.
- **Training and Development:** Team members handling enquiries receive ongoing training on DEI principles, inclusive language, and relevant policies to maintain high-quality responses.
- **Template and Documentation Use:** Standard response templates and internal guidance documents help ensure clarity, consistency, and compliance with HSE standards.
- **Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms:** Regular reviews of enquiry handling, including feedback from enquirers and internal audits, help identify areas for improvement.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Trends and common themes from DEI enquiries are analysed to refine responses, update guidance, and inform policy development.
- **Risk Assessment and Quality Assurance:** Following a risk assessment of the DEI Enquiry Service on 13/03/25, several additional control measures were identified. These measures will be considered and/or implemented to ensure quality and reduce the risk of providing incorrect, delayed, or insufficient advice. (See [Appendix 10](#))

3.6 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms

The DEI team monitors enquiry handling through structured reporting and regular reviews.

Key monitoring elements include:

- **Real-Time Tracking:** The Enquiry Log is updated continuously to ensure all enquiries are categorised, documented and addressed appropriately.
- **Monthly National Dashboard Reports:** An overview of DEI enquiries received, including volume, key trends, and common themes.
- **Quarterly Regional Dashboard Reports:** An overview and highlights of regional trends and insights.
- **Annual Reports:** A comprehensive analysis of DEI issues, identifying patterns and providing recommendations for improvements.

3.7 Audit Process

- **Annual Audits:** The DEI team conducts internal audits to assess compliance with this SOP, ensuring timely responses that align with HSE policies.

- **GDPR Compliance:** Regular reviews of data handling procedures ensure adherence to data protection regulations, focusing on confidentiality and security.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Feedback from users is reviewed to drive continuous improvement in DEI responses.

4.0 Consultation

4.1 Stakeholder involvement

N/A

4.2 External review

N/A

5.0 National implementation plan

5.1 Resource implications

The DEI resources necessary to implement this Standard Operating Procedure include:

- Information Technology availability
- DEI team availability

5.2 Describe the structure and governance of the national implementation team.

The HSE Diversity, Equality and Inclusion team has responsibility for implementing this Standard Operating Procedure. This team is part of the HSE's Capability and Leadership function within National Human Resources. The structure of this team is as follows:

- 1 National Lead, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (General Manager)
- 2 Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Managers (Grade VIII)
- 1 Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Officer (Grade VII)

5.3 List tools and resources developed to support local implementation of the National 3PG.

- HSE Outlook Email
- MS Excel
- "\$DEI" Shared drive on centrally managed server

5.4 Expected date of full implementation

This Standard Operating Procedure will be implemented from 1 March 2025.

6.0 Governance and approval

Governance of this document sits with the DEI team. The National Lead for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion has the final say on the content of this Standard Operating Procedure.

7.0 Communication and dissemination plan

This Standard Operating Procedure is primarily for the use of the DEI team. The document will be made available for access by all team members on the DEI team's shared folder. The document may be shared with key partner agencies and stakeholders for the purpose of sharing good practice.

8.0 Sustainability

8.1 Describe the plan for monitoring and audit

N/A

8.2 National audit tool

N/A

9.0 Review / update

9.1 Next review date

- This document is reviewed every three years. The next date for revision is 1 March 2028.
- This document may be amended at any time by the relevant DEI team member. Approval responsibility is with the National Lead for Diversity Equality and Inclusion.
- The National Lead for Diversity Equality and Inclusion is responsible for amending the front sheet of this document.

- The relevant DEI team member may escalate feedback to the National Lead if it is deemed to require immediate action or onward escalation.

10.0 References

- [How to Develop HSE National Policies, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines: A Practical Guide](#) 2023
- [HSE Dignity at Work Policy](#) (2022)
- [HSE Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure](#) (2004)
- [HSE Guidelines on Terms and Conditions of Employment](#) (2024)
- [HSE People Strategy 2025-2027](#)
- [HSE Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy](#) (2025-2027)
- [HSE IT Information Security Policy](#)
- [HSE IT National Backup and Recovery Policy](#)

11.0 Glossary of terms

- **DEI:** Diversity, Equality and Inclusion
- **Diversity Characteristic:** a characteristic of a person defined as a protected “ground” under the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. There are nine diversity grounds.
- **MS:** Microsoft
- **PII:** Personally Identifiable Information
- **PPPG:** Policy, Procedure, Protocol and/or Guideline
- **Guideline:** a principle or criterion that guides or directs action
- **SOP:** Standard Operating Procedure

12.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Membership of Development Group
Appendix 2: Membership of Approval Governance Group
Appendix 3: Conflict of Interest Declaration Form
Appendix 4: Sample implementation plan template
Appendix 5: National Audit Tool
Appendix 6: Checklist

Appendix 7: Signature sheet

Appendix 8: Enquiry Service Auto Response Template

Appendix 9: Enquiry Service Data Index

Appendix 10: Enquiry Service Risk Assessment Extract

**** Please note that Appendices 1-7 are not included in the current SOP. Templates for these appendices can be found in the HSE National Central Repository. ****

Appendix 8: Enquiry Service Auto Response

Thank you for getting in touch. We aim to respond within 3 working days, but if your enquiry is urgent, we'll do our best to reply sooner.

All enquiries are handled confidentially, and we're here to offer a supportive and respectful experience.

In the meantime, feel free to explore our Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) resources, including our [Reasonable Accommodation Guideline](#), on our [DEI webpages](#). You can also learn about our [Employee Network Groups](#), which provide valuable spaces for peer support and connection.

Kind regards

Diversity Equality and Inclusion Team

www.hse.ie | @hselive | youtube.com/HSEIreland

Appendix 9: Enquiry Service Data Index

Enquiry Service Categories 2025	
Enquiries are recorded and categorised by one item listed below:	
1	Reasonable Accommodation
1.1	Technological / Digital Accessibility
1.2	Physical Accessibility / Working Environment
1.3	Communication Support and Literacy
1.4	Workplace Guidance and Supports
1.5	Work Arrangements / Practices
1.6	Role adjustments and re-design
1.7	Recruitment support
2	Dignity at Work
3	Health & Safety
4	Training Needs and Access
5	Terminology / Language
6	Employee Engagement
6.1	Employee Networks
6.2	Employee Merchandise
6.3	DEI Events & Other Events
6.4	Promotional and Awareness Raising
7	Sharing Diversity Status (Disclosure at Work)
8	Policies, Strategies, Legislation, and Guidelines
9	Recruitment and Selection (incl. Contracting)
10	Research, Data, and Analytics
11	General Enquiry
12	Other

Diversity Characteristic
Gender
Civil Status
Family Status
Age
Sexual Orientation
Race / Ethnicity
Religion
Membership of Traveller Community
Disability

Appendix 10: Enquiry Service Risk Assessment Extract

Extract of “Additional Control Measures” agreed in March 2025 for consideration and / or future implementation:

1. **Feedback & Stakeholder Engagement** - Support monitoring and review of enquiries.
 - Collect feedback to refine responses and enhance service delivery, e.g.:
 - Conduct a satisfaction survey with the Enquiry Service for continuous improvement.
 - Identify distribution methods (e.g., via networks, survey links in email responses).
2. **Templates** - Continue developing a suite of templates and resources to standardise responses.
3. **Formal Escalation Pathway** –
 - Establish a structured process for handling high-risk or sensitive enquiries requiring senior, team, or specialist input.
 - Define clear escalation criteria and document the process.
4. **Internal Quality Audit & Evaluation**
 - Include a quality review of past responses (potentially integrating with external department reviews).
 - Compare with other HSE Enquiry Services (e.g., Ask HR) for benchmarking.

5. Case study review process –

- Implement a structured review process to assess past responses and improve decision-making frameworks (i.e., lessons learned).
- Define review frequency and method (e.g., annual reviews, anonymised case discussions).

6. Enquiries Outside of the Email Service- Consider incorporating a process step in the SOP for handling responses in unstructured environments.