

West Cork Music Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy



Outside Bantry House, West Cork Chamber Music Festival © Ben Russell

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Contact Officer:	Helen Dawson
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Formal Review of Policy by:	Irish Centre for Diversity
Policy References	This policy references and supplements West Cork Music's Grievance & Disciplinary Procedure

Brief Policy Summary:

This policy sets out how West Cork Music will achieve its aims to promote diversity & inclusion as an employer and supplier of services.

It outlines how Diversity & Inclusion will underpin all areas of the organisation's work and service provision, including the communities within which it operates.

An Action Plan with clear targets will a timeline is included.

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Chamber Music Festival musician, Arsema Asghodom, Bantry 2024 © Karlis Dzjamko

1. Purpose

1.1. Policy Statement

West Cork Music recognises that its customers, staff, artists, participants and volunteers come from diverse backgrounds, with varying experiences and needs. We are committed to ensuring diversity & inclusion is embedded into our day-to-day working practices. West Cork Music actively promotes fairness, respect, equality, diversity inclusion and engagement and is committed to continuous improvement.

- 1.2. Through our policies and in our day-to-day work and fulfilment of our legal responsibilities, West Cork Music is committed to promoting equality and fairness and combating discrimination. This applies to everyone, regardless of Gender, Civil status, Family status, Sexual orientation, Religion, Age, Disability, Race (includes race, nationality or ethnic or national origins) or Membership of the Travelling Community.



Bantry Library, West Cork Literary Festival © Ben Russell

2. Objectives

2.1. In order to effectively implement its commitment to being an equal and diverse organisation, West Cork Music has identified the following objectives:

- Provide the organisation's leaders with the skills and knowledge to fully embed fairness, respect, equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement into the organisation's culture, strategy, and processes.
- Provide diversity & inclusion training to all staff and Board members, which will include content on their responsibilities, relevant legislation, and this policy.
- Ensure that no customer or potential customer receives less favourable treatment than any other, providing reasonable adjustments to services where necessary in order to facilitate this.
- Ensure opportunities are accessible to all, introducing reasonable accommodations to facilitate this where required.
- Create an environment where staff, artists, participants, volunteers and customers are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- Enforce a zero-tolerance approach in relation to discrimination, bullying, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour, thoroughly investigating any reported incidents and taking appropriate actions.
- Ensure fair treatment from job/volunteer application to interview, which is free from bias.
- Ensure fair treatment in artistic programming, where decisions are made with consideration of artistic excellence, and the needs to amplify new voices and diverse experiences within general programming constraints.
- Make the best possible use of our existing and potential workforce through effective talent management.
- Provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment where everyone can contribute to their fullest potential.
- Challenge discrimination and promote diversity.

2.2. To support West Cork Music EDI policies and objectives, the organisation has developed and EDI Action Plan, published April 2025, in conjunction with the policy's first 2-year review.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to the organisation, its Board members, employees, partners, artists, participants, customers and volunteers, and to any external stakeholders which are supported by or engage with the organisation.

3.2. Diversity & inclusion imposes rights and responsibilities on every member of staff or volunteer. All employees, volunteers and the Board of Directors will be informed that a Diversity & inclusion Policy is in operation and that they are bound to comply with its requirements. The policy will also be drawn to the attention of external stakeholders, job applicants, and customers.

3.3. The policy ensures that our statutory equality duties outlined in the [Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015](#) and the [Equal Status Acts 2000-2018](#) are met.

3.4. The 9 Grounds are defined as being:

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Disability, including non-visible disabilities, a wide range of impairments and illnesses, and physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.
- Race (includes race, nationality or ethnic or national origins)
- Membership of the Travelling Community



Volunteers at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival 2023 © Karlis Dzjamko

4. Key Equality & Diversity Concepts

Diversity can be defined as the visible and non-visible differences between individuals. These differences can be related to race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, and gender, as well as the many differences in values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural views, skills, knowledge, education, background, employment, parenthood, marital status, and life experiences of every individual.

4.2. **Equal Opportunities** can be defined as ensuring all those involved with or wishing to be involved with the organisation, regardless of their diversity, are provided with opportunity based on their ability or potential to perform the required activity or engage in activities provided by the organisation.

4.3. **Discrimination** is unequal treatment of an individual because of their membership of a particular class or group, such as sex, race, or trade union. It may be direct, for example, refusing to send someone on a training course because they are married or have children. It may be indirect, for example, declaring a post as being suitable only for a full-time member of staff without proper justification (i.e. establishing the need for a full-time member of staff rather than for part-timers or job sharing).

4.4. Discrimination may be subtle and unconscious and may not be easy to identify. For example, discrimination sometimes results from general assumptions about the capabilities, characteristics and interests of particular groups or individuals, which are allowed to influence the treatment of staff or job applicants or clients. This includes unconscious bias.

4.5. **Harassment or bullying** has the effect of causing undue stress on individuals and of de-motivating them. [Harassment or bullying](#) of any kind will not be tolerated and serves to undermine the safe, supportive, and welcoming environment which West Cork Music wishes to encourage.

4.6. **Victimisation** is when an individual is treated badly or subjected to a detriment because of a complaint he/she/they made about discrimination or helped someone who had been the victim of discrimination.

5. Management and Delivery of this Policy

5.1. Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement are the responsibility of everyone within West Cork Music.

5.2. The Leadership team of West Cork Music is committed to embedding Diversity & Inclusion within the business, ensuring that everything we do and the way it is done, makes reference to and considers the impact upon our equality objectives.

5.3. It is the responsibility of West Cork Music Chief Executive to implement, monitor and evaluate the diversity & inclusion policy in terms of employment practices (selection, recruitment, and retention, including volunteers and artists) and service delivery. The Chief Executive is also under a duty to ensure that the Board of Directors is regularly kept updated in terms of the policy's implementation. Additionally, the implications for the Board arising from the decisions it makes and the policies it introduces must be made clear to the Board.

5.4. The Policy Statement (at paragraph 1.1) will be communicated to all staff, volunteers, artists, participants, visitors, customers, and other stakeholders using a variety of methods such as email, the website, displayed in offices and where appropriate included in publications.

5.5. Staff are expected to be aware of personal prejudices, unconscious bias and stereotypes and avoid labels at all times.

5.6. It is expected that when staff or Board Members represent West Cork Music at any time, including through attendance at committees, meetings with external stakeholders and contact with customers, they will ensure that the diversity & inclusion principles and practices outlined in this policy are adhered to.

5.7. We will use an Equality Impact Assessments framework to regularly review our policies, to minimise the possibility of directly or indirectly discriminating against any group or individual as a result of our working methodologies.

5.8. Existing processes will be used to review and investigate any complaints in relation to discrimination, harassment or bullying as follows:

- staff, volunteers, participants and artists - [Disciplinary and Grievance procedures](#)
- customers (those using our services) - Complaints procedure ([contact WCM office](#))

5.9. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be considered and will be a significant factor when considering partnering, collaborating and contracting with other

businesses, suppliers and organisations. The extent will be dependent on the work and degree of association with the business, supplier or organisation.



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6. Selection, Recruitment and Retention

6.1. West Cork Music aims to promote diversity & inclusion as an employer and programmer. It also aims to ensure that no job applicant, employee, artist, participant or volunteer receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of the policy. Employees involved in the selection and recruitment process, and in the management of staff, artists, participants or volunteers, will review this policy prior to the start of the process and will be encouraged to consider unconscious biases and stereotypes in order to avoid any discriminatory practices in the way in which they shortlist, recruit or manage employees, artists, participants or volunteers.

6.2. We will take whatever positive action is required where it can be shown that under-representation of any particular group has occurred in recruitment or programming. Where appropriate and legally permissible employees from under-represented groups will be given training and encouragement in order to promote diversity & inclusion within West Cork Music.

6.3. We regard discrimination, harassment, abuse, victimisation or bullying of staff, artists, participants, volunteers, customers or of others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct. Condoning such behaviour could also be treated as a disciplinary offence. As well as disciplining the perpetrator(s), we will give appropriate support to people who complain of harassment of themselves or others.

6.4. West Cork Music actively considers the working practices it has in place to address inequality, and discrimination and how it promotes fairness for all. Examples of these against each of the protected characteristics are given below but is not a definitive list of all that West Cork Music does:

6.4.1. We recognise that employees, artists, participants and volunteers have different needs at different stages during their careers. For example, they may need to balance work and caring responsibilities at various career stages. We will attempt to accommodate requests to work flexibly, whether part-time or from home, and to assist visiting artists by providing appropriate accommodations, information, and/or care to help meet accessibility and childcare needs.

6.4.2. We recognise that organisations are obliged, under the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, to make reasonable accommodations to support disabled people and enable them to do their job without unnecessary difficulty. We will make accommodations which are reasonable, whether or not we are obliged to do so by law, and whether or not a disabled applicant or employee is covered by the definition of ‘disabled’ under the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015

6.4.3. Our terms and conditions of employment allow for paternity and partner leave in addition to standard maternity leave, in accordance with current legislation. Allowance

is also made for compassionate and dependant's leave to deal with domestic emergencies through our family friendly policies.

6.4.4. We are committed to ensuring employees, artists, participants and volunteers do not experience discrimination (or less favourable opportunities/treatment) based on their race, religion or belief by: -

- Allowing time and, if possible, a place for prayers during the working day and at the workplace as appropriate.
- Considering employees' dietary requirements in catering, and when providing facilities for staff, artists, participants and volunteers to eat and store food.
- Allowing staff of particular faiths to take their holidays for religious festivals and other religious observance.
- Trying to arrange job interviews or other important work meetings at times when they do not clash with important religious festivals.
- Not imposing a dress code with which people of a particular religion cannot comply.

6.4.5. We will not discriminate on grounds of age in recruitment, promotion, training, or the availability of benefits - such as pension contributions or health insurance.

6.4.6. We will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, where an individual is in the process of gender reassignment or where an individual has completed this reassignment.

6.4.7. We will not discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership and will support individual needs as required.

6.4.8. We will not discriminate on the grounds of an individual's sex or on the grounds of the sexual orientation providing everyone, whether a member of staff or an artist, with exactly the same opportunity to achieve their goals.

6.5. As part of its talent management strategy, West Cork Music will offer training or education development to enhance potential within the existing job, arising out of needs identified through appraisal or from other circumstances, will, where appropriate or possible, be provided. We may, in certain circumstances, allow for paid or unpaid leave for training or educational purposes. In all training opportunities we will pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination on the grounds set out in this policy.

6.6. West Cork Music's retention, reward and progression processes are fair and take account of the social, domestic, cultural, and physical obstacles to people progressing. We

seek to identify where these exist for individuals and take actions to limit these where necessary.



Children's Concert with Eamon Sweeney, West Cork Chamber Music Festival 2026 © Karlis Dzjamko

7. Service Delivery

7.1. We will make public our commitment to combating discriminatory attitudes where these are encountered by publishing this policy widely amongst staff, partners, recognised trade unions and external stakeholders and in a variety of formats.

7.2. We will use a variety of methods to regularly consult with our customers. We will gather their views on existing and planned services, including changes to provision.

7.3. We will, where possible, provide training to staff and volunteers, to enable them to confidently support customers and participants with access needs, as we have done to enable staff and volunteers to identify and assist customers who may have dementia.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

8.1. West Cork Music will systematically evaluate its services and the effectiveness of its diversity & inclusion policy by a variety of means.

8.2. Information gathered through the complaints, grievances, disciplinary or other appropriate processes will be analysed by the nine grounds of discrimination where this information is available to identify any particular trends. Where any negative trends are identified, these will be investigated fully, and recommendations made to the Board.

8.3. Responsibility for review of this policy sits with West Cork Music's General Manager.

8.4. A formal review will be completed every 2 years.

8.5. Additionally, an interim review would be conducted in the following circumstances:

- A change is made to relevant legislation, including but not limited to the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000–2018
- The investigation into a negative trend indicates a review of this policy is appropriate.
- An external review of our services identifies the need for a policy review.

For further details, questions or clarification about this policy contact the West Cork Music Office at festivals@westcorkmusic.ie

9. West Cork Music Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

9.1. Actions So Far

9.1.1. Staff have undertaken Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training with the Irish Centre for Diversity.

9.1.2. In 2024 and 2025, staff undertook in-person dementia awareness training with the Bantry Dementia Alliance to support better understanding of the needs of people living with dementia. WCM is also working with the Alliance on a Meet & Greet initiative, and volunteers are encouraged to complete a short online course on simple communication strategies they can use to support a diverse audience.

9.1.3. In June 2026, West Cork Music launched a new website which is WACG 2.2. AAA compliant. It has an accessibility section and an access guide, and it provides detailed information on access to each venue used for festivals and events.

9.1.4. The EDI policy has been approved by the Board and published online, with news sent to WCM email and social media subscribers. Public-facing spaces, such as the WCM Box Office have also publicised the policy in print form.

9.1.5. EDI questions are included in audience surveys to help us better understand the needs of our audience. Responses are monitored and used to support ongoing improvements in provision.

9.1.6. West Cork Music includes an access information question in its surveys, contracts, brochures and website, to help capture feedback from its audience, artists, staff, participants, and volunteers, and to better understand their needs, in contracts, brochures and on the website.

9.1.7. West Cork Music includes EDI compliancy information in its contracts to increase awareness of these values.

9.1.8. WCM send its EDI policy to the Irish Centre for Diversity for regular review.

9.1.9. We promote artistic and social accessibility by marketing Fringe concerts as short, family-friendly concerts, and as fun gateway events for people that may be less demanding than longer and more formal concerts.

9.1.10. Subtitles are used for online Literary Festival talks to allow greater access for hard of hearing people, and any materials, such as PowerPoint presentations are prepared accessibly and available to all participants. A loop induction system for hearing aids, and headsets are made available at live events where possible. The Literary Festival employs an ISL interpreter for events featuring Deaf authors. Literary Festival facilitates hybrid events for authors who are unable to attend in person due to illness.

9.1.11. The EDI Officer completed Safe to Create training with Screen Ireland in 2025.

9.1.12. Increase number of Children's Events throughout the year and in Festivals

9.1.13. Concerts in schools, nursing homes and Co-Action centres take place during Festivals and throughout the year, supporting the inclusion of people and groups who are unable to attend regularly scheduled concerts.

9.2. Planned Actions

9.2.1. Visibility, Promotion and Embedding of Equality Diversity and Inclusion at all levels of the organisation

9.2.1.1 Goal: Increase the visibility of our commitment to EDI, and the awareness of staff, artists, audience, participants and volunteers of these values.

Action(s):

- i. Update relevant policy documents to include EDI references (e.g. Volunteer Policy, Casual Workers Policy etc.)
- ii. Contracts for staff and artists, masterclass agreements will be updated to reflect EDI compliance
- iii. Update website with a page outlining what EDI is, and how WCM is striving to meet these values – page to be updated as new Action Plan Goals are met
- iv. Include where appropriate, EDI and access information in promotional material

Timeline: December 2026

9.2.1.2. Goal: Include EDI visibility and promotion in hiring and staff/volunteer orientation/training practices.

Action(s):

- i. Hiring practices and volunteer engagement practices will be updated to include clear EDI compliance
- ii. New staff, temporary or permanent, Board members and volunteers will be sent our current EDI policy as part of their orientation/training.

Timeline: March 2026

9.2.2. Ensure that best practices for maintaining, improving, updating and enacting EDI policies and procedures are in place

9.2.2.1. Goal: Update policy every 2 years with input from relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to current staff, audience surveys, artist feedback, and the Irish Centre for Diversity.

Action(s):

- i. Set the date for review and ensure that relevant staff have time set aside
- ii. Review whether the goals in the Action Plan have been achieved, and reflect on the positive or negative impacts of the outcomes
- iii. Include in staff meeting agendas where appropriate
- iv. Consult with the Irish Centre for Diversity on current best practices or legislative changes
- v. Update the policy after input from relevant stakeholders and send to the Board
- vi. Undertake additional training for staff and volunteers where appropriate

Timeline: April 2027

9.2.3. New Venue Project

9.2.3.1. Goal: Build a new venue and education hub for concerts, education purposes and other events, that which will be fit for purpose and accessible in line with the principles of Universal Design.

Action(s):

- i. Build committee will maintain oversight of the architects to ensure that the designs meet the artistic needs of performers, and the access needs of artists, audience, staff, students and participants

Timeline: Estimated to complete in 2030.



Andrew Yee from Attacca Quartet © Karlis Dzjamko