

2026



THE LABOUR COURT
An Chúirt Oibreachais

Public Sector Duty

Equality and Human Rights Assessment

2026

Contents

- 1. Introduction..... 2
- 2. Overview of the Labour Court 2
 - 2.1 Services to the Public..... 3
 - 2.1 Services to Staff 3
- 3. Assessment..... 3
 - 3.1 Areas of Work Where Human Rights & Equality Issues May Arise..... 3
 - 3.2 Measures in Place to Ensure the Public Sector Duty Is Met 4
 - 3.3 Identified Gaps 5
 - 3.4 Planned Actions to Address Gaps 5

1. Introduction

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 there is an obligation on public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees and their service users. This obligation is known as the Public Sector Duty.

To fulfil this duty, public bodies must:

- assess the human rights and equality issues it believes are relevant to its functions
- address these issues and describe how it plans to address these issues in its strategic plan
- report on developments and progress in the annual report

The first step for public bodies to meet their obligations under the duty is to assess any human rights and equality issues for people who use its service and its staff.

This assessment is prepared in accordance with Section 42 of the 2014 Act and considers the equality and human rights issues of relevance to the staff and service users of the Labour Court and its offices.

2. Overview of the Labour Court

The Labour Court is referred to in the [Department of Enterprise, Tourism & Employment's Human Rights & Equality Assessment](#).

The Labour Court operates as an industrial relations tribunal and is the sole appellate body for employment rights cases. The Court also has a statutory role in Sectoral Employment Orders, Registered Employment Agreements and Employment Registered Orders. In both its industrial relations capacity and employment rights role, the Courts hear all relevant parties and in employment rights cases it takes evidence and hears from relevant witnesses. Depending on the nature of the case the Court will issue either a Recommendation, Determination, Decision, or Order. In employment rights cases it issues its decision which is appealable on a point of law to the High Court.

Its functions can be divided between those relating to industrial relations matters and those relating to the determination of appeals in employment rights matters including employment equality act appeals.

While the Labour Court is primarily a public facing office, it also ensures that the same high standards that it provides to the public, in terms of equality etc, are afforded to each staff member.

Accessibility measures are in place via its Accessibility Officer.

2.1 Services to the Public

The Labour Court provides a range of services to the public. It hears disputes referred under employment rights and employment equality legislation and industrial-relations matters. The Court manages the full hearing lifecycle, including scheduling, case management, provision of interpreter supports (including ISL) where required, and the publication of written outcomes. Information on procedures, hearing arrangements and Labour Court Rules is available to assist parties in preparing for and participating in hearings. The Court also provides general customer-service support through its Access Officer and administrative team, ensuring that members of the public can access information, request accommodations and engage with the Court effectively. It is not within the remit of the Court in employment rights cases to provide advice to parties in respect of the cases they are pursuing.

2.1 Services to Staff

The Labour Court supports its staff through the Department's and its own internal policies, including HR, ICT, Learning and Development, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) structures. Staff have access to learning opportunities, induction supports, administrative guidance, and reasonable accommodations where required. Workplace policies such as Dignity at Work, anti-bullying and harassment procedures, and flexible-working arrangements apply to all Court staff. The administration team engage in training relevant to their roles, including disability-awareness training and ED&I learning delivered Department-wide. Through these supports, the Labour Court aims to provide a professional, respectful and inclusive working environment for all employees.

3. Assessment

3.1 Areas of Work Where Human Rights & Equality Issues May Arise

Human rights and equality considerations arise across all aspects of the Court's work, including:

Access, Participation & Non-Discrimination

- Ensuring all users—regardless of language ability, disability, literacy level, or other protected characteristics—can participate fully in proceedings.
- Right to respect and dignity, including courteous and respectful treatment in all written, telephone and in-person interactions.

Fair Procedures & Transparency

- Ensuring the right to fair procedures is upheld in all cases.
- Use of practices that ensure equal opportunity for both parties to be heard.
- Promoting judicial awareness and non-discrimination

Inclusive Communication & Accessibility

- Commitment to plain-English communication and clarity of information for all Court users.

Staff Experience & Internal Equality

- Ensuring staff have the right to dignity in the workplace, in line with Civil Service policies.
- Provision of reasonable accommodations for staff with disabilities and support through HR and the Department's Disability Liaison structures.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity in access to training, development, mobility, and internal processes, consistent with Departmental ED&I policies.

3.2 Measures in Place to Ensure the Public Sector Duty Is Met

- All Labour Court services are available to the public without restriction, supported by the Access Officer who coordinates disability-related support needs
- Accessibility guidance and assistance provided by the Labour Court Access Officer, who coordinates supports such as ISL and other accommodations.
- A Customer Charter is in place and scheduled for review to align with evolving user needs and accessibility standards
- Commitment to respectful and dignified treatment of all service users in every interaction—written, telephone, virtual, and in-person – supported by training such as JAM Card Inclusion in the Workplace Training and Telephone Communication Techniques, equipping staff to provide patient, sensitive support and enhancing awareness of hidden disabilities
- Interpreter services (spoken language and ISL) are provided where required supporting equal access to hearings
- The Court applies Labour Court Rules to ensure fair procedures, transparency and equal treatment.
- Court communication, scheduling practices, and hearing processes are designed to ensure fair notice, equal opportunities to participate, and accessibility.
- The Equal Treatment Benchbook, distributed to all Court Members, provides practical guidance to identify vulnerability, understand different lived experiences, and avoid discrimination. It serves as additional guidance for Members, reinforcing fairness, impartiality and inclusion.
- Staff are covered by Departmental frameworks on equality, dignity at work, and reasonable accommodations, ensuring they experience an inclusive, respectful workplace.

- Staff have access to a wide range of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) and disability-awareness training delivered through the Department's LCDU, including upcoming disability-awareness modules and ED&I training available via OneLearning.

3.3 Identified Gaps

- Greater support for staff in understanding disability, neurodivergence, and barriers to participation.
- Opportunity to explore communication supports (captioning, alternative formats, and sensory-friendly options).
- Scope for expanding staff awareness of dignity-at-work rights, reasonable accommodations processes, and inclusive practices.
- Continued focus on ensuring consistency in accessibility across all hearing venues.

3.4 Planned Actions to Address Gaps

Training & Capability Development

- Administrative staff to attend Disability Awareness Training covering:
 1. Diversity of Disability
 2. Appropriate Language
 3. Bias
 4. Medical vs Social Model of Disability
 5. Equality & Disability Acts
 6. Reasonable Accommodations and Disclosure
- Development of additional ED&I training modules for Court Members, including tools for inclusive hearings and better understanding of vulnerability.
- Continued use of the Equal Treatment Benchbook in Member induction and ongoing learning.

Accessibility & Communication Enhancements

- Research AI captioning and live-transcription tools to support users with hearing difficulties and enhance hybrid/virtual accessibility.
- Continued provision of spoken-language interpreters and ISL support on request.
- More prominent guidance for users on how to request accommodations, interpreters, or alternative formats.

Strengthening User Experience

- Integration of respect, dignity and equal treatment commitments into the updated Customer Charter.
- Ensuring users are clearly informed of their right to respectful treatment, privacy where appropriate, and equal access.

Support for Staff

- Reinforcement of dignity-at-work principles through training and internal communications.
- Improved visibility of reasonable accommodations procedures, ergonomic supports, and HR assistance.

Governance & Continuous Improvement

- Ongoing monitoring of accessibility needs through user feedback of Court experience.
- Review of information materials, templates and website content to ensure compliance with accessibility and plain-English standards.