

Revision 1

HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

UÉ/PD/109

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Uisce Éireann Human Rights Policy (the “Policy”) outlines our commitment to ensuring that fundamental and internationally recognised human rights are respected within our operations and value chain. It underscores our intention to conduct Uisce Éireann's activities in a manner consistent with respecting these rights and avoiding any infringements upon them.


Our respect for human rights is built into our organisational vision for a sustainable Ireland where water is respected and protected, for the planet and all the lives it supports. It is central to our ‘THRIVE’ organisational strategic objectives. Our commitment to human rights is consistent with our values and behaviours of delivering for customers and communities, working better together, doing the right thing, aiming high and keeping each other safe. These values define the character of the company, guide our actions, decisions and behaviours providing a framework for how we interact with our colleagues, customers, and stakeholders. Our Code of Business Conduct sets out our collective commitment to our values.

The application of this Policy is core to one of Uisce Éireann’s values ‘We do the right thing’, which encourages an effective ‘speak-up’ culture. This is just one of a number of supporting policies and procedures in place to help inform the ethical behaviours that Uisce Éireann expects from our employees, contractors, service delivery partners and other relevant parties with whom we may deal with directly or indirectly.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- all Board members;
- all Uisce Éireann personnel, which includes Employees (as defined directly below), consultants, service providers, contractors, volunteers, work experience students and agency workers (“**Staff**”);
- Certain sections of the Policy are tailored specifically to employees, namely a person who has entered into, or works under, a contract of employment (which includes permanent full-time and part-time workers, trainees, interns, work experience students and casual workers) (“**Employees**”). This is due to the nature of the employment relationship and the specific responsibilities and obligations that it entails;
- anyone with whom Uisce Éireann may deal directly or indirectly through supply chain activities.

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3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to outline our commitment to respect and protect fundamental and internationally recognised human rights, and particularly those that are relevant to Uisce Éireann, including our Employees, Staff, customers and the communities in which we operate.

At a national level, the Irish Government has adopted the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (the ‘Act’) which establishes a framework for public bodies to integrate human rights and equality considerations into their operations, ensuring that they contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. Section 42 of the Act imposes a statutory obligation on public bodies in performing their function to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services; and
- Protect the human rights of staff and service users.

The legislation stipulates that public bodies are required to set out in a publicly accessible manner, an assessment of the relevant human rights issues, the actions in place or proposed to address those issues, and report on developments and achievements in that regard in its annual report.


In addition, the 2024 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Regulations transposes EU 2022/2464 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (“CSRD”) into national law. This legislation focuses on improving the reporting and disclosure quality of corporate non-financial information, including human rights.

4. POLICY

Uisce Éireann is committed to actively promoting a culture where human rights are respected, by conducting operations in a manner that complies with all applicable laws and regulations. This culture is promoted and led by the Uisce Eireann Board, Executive and extended leadership team. We intend to ensure we have effective policies and measures in place which safeguard against human rights abuses taking place.

In this Policy, and to comply with the regulations referred to in Section 3, human rights encompass at the very least, the internationally recognised rights outlined in the International Bill of Human Rights and the International Labour Organization (“ILO”) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. It draws upon essential international guidance documents, such as the:

- United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (“UNGPs”),
- United Nations Global Compact Ten Principles; and
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

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Collectively, these documents provide a framework for upholding and safeguarding human rights, alongside providing potential due diligence and remedial measures. They provide the basis for a broad cohesive approach to recognise the interdependence of personal dignity, social equality and sustainable development. Those considered most relevant to Uisce Éireann at this time are set out under Section 5.

This Policy also incorporates the specific human rights requirements for public bodies prescribed in the Act, as amended, which defines human rights as those rights, liberties and freedoms of individuals protected by the Irish Constitution, any agreement, treaty or convention to which Ireland is a party to and those that may reasonably be inferred as being inherent in persons as human beings and necessary to enable each person to live with dignity and participate in the economic, social or cultural life in the State.

5. COMMITMENT TO RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS

Uisce Éireann has a strong collaborative, values-led culture; we endeavour to uphold the principles of globally acknowledged human rights, even in situations where this may pose challenging and occasionally conflicting situations. Our objective is to avoid any direct or indirect involvement in human rights violations, and to be transparent in reporting our performance in this regard.


The Uisce Éireann Code of Business Conduct specifically references respect for human rights, including valuing the diversity of the people with whom we work and the contributions they make.

The following paragraphs set out Uisce Éireann’s commitments regarding the most relevant aspects of Human Rights to it.

Equality and Non-discrimination

Uisce Éireann is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued. We respect diversity of characteristics including but not limited to gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation/gender identity, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, and membership of the Traveller community.

We are committed to ensuring that all individuals are given equal opportunities and are accepted regardless of their differences. We recognise the diversity of our Staff by implementing policies that support equality as well as cultural and religious beliefs. We are committed to raising equal pay awareness and to identify actions to address gender pay gap.

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We are committed to our legal obligations as well as positively promoting equal opportunity in all aspects of working in Uisce Éireann. We recognise the benefits in having a diverse workforce coming from different backgrounds and with a broad range of different skills and abilities.

Equality and non-discrimination related policies include our Code of Business Conduct, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Holiday Swap Policy.

Dignity at Work

Uisce Éireann will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment in the workplace. We have a long-standing commitment to creating and maintaining a working environment where all Staff are treated with dignity and respect and are free to work without fear of bullying, general or sexual harassment. Where concerns are raised it is our policy to allow for informal resolution and mediation, where appropriate. In extreme cases, there may be a requirement for disciplinary action, which may lead to termination of employment.

Uisce Éireann has a dedicated Dignity at Work Policy.


Occupational Health and Safety

Uisce Éireann is committed to implementing the highest health and safety standards. We have established and maintain the necessary systems, processes, and resources to meet our statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as the expectations of our Staff, and those affected by our activities, in providing a healthy and safe working environment.

Our approach to occupational health and safety has been developed by taking into consideration the core values of Uisce Éireann, the requirements of our stakeholders and using international standards as a basis for implementing a comprehensive Safety Management System capable of enabling us to meet and go beyond these requirements.

Uisce Éireann is committed to ensuring the safety culture is continuously improved and enhanced through our 'Work Safe, Home Safe' initiative, which is designed to embed safety across our operations, putting it at the heart of what we do.

Occupational health and safety related policies include our Safety Statement and Occupational Health & Safety Policy.

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Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

Uisce Éireann acknowledges and upholds the rights of Employees to join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining and enjoy freedom of association. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is statutorily represented on the Board of Uisce Éireann. We fully engage with trade unions who represent directly employed Staff and, where it is appropriate to do so with those who work in local authorities.

Wages and Working Time

Uisce Éireann is committed to providing fair working hours alongside a market and performance-based reward model for all Employees. We work within the parameters of the Organisation of Working Time legislation in Ireland and abide by applicable laws and regulations regarding pay practices. We are committed to maintaining a flexible working environment for the benefit of our Staff members whilst continuing to deliver for customers and communities.

Wages and Working Time related policies include our Hybrid Working Policy.


Training and Professional Development

Uisce Éireann acknowledges and fosters the advancement of Staff members' skills without any form of discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities are afforded to all. We work with our Staff members to ensure that their learning and development is appropriate to their needs and aligned with team and organisational goals. We want all members of Staff to feel confident about their ability to carry out the duties and responsibilities of their role in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

Training and professional development related policies include our Further Education Policy, Learning and Development Policy, Professional Subscriptions and Equal Opportunities Policy.

Child Labour, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking

All employment with Uisce Éireann is expected to be voluntary. We will uphold a zero-tolerance approach towards any form of unacceptable treatment of workers including, but not limited to, the exploitation of children, physical punishment or abuse, involuntary servitude, or human trafficking. We will fully respect all applicable laws in these regards.

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Respect for Workers in Value Chain

We make best endeavours to ensure our suppliers are aware of our expectations in terms of their compliance with our human rights commitments, as set out in our Supplier Sustainability Charter, which states that our suppliers are expected to ensure:

- high standards of integrity are upheld by their own, and their subcontractors' employees;
- corruption, bribery or fraud are proactively identified;
- appropriate whistleblowing procedures are established and maintained.

Our suppliers are also encouraged to:

- treat their employees and subcontractors with fairness, inclusion and respect regardless of personal circumstances or background;
- support the development of a culture that ensures the physical, mental, and psychological safety and wellbeing of their employees and the employees of their subcontractors;
- uphold workers' rights to exercise freedom of association and collective bargaining;
- respect ILO labour standards on wages and working hours;
- develop community collaborations that have a positive social impact.


Respect for Service Users/Customers

Uisce Éireann is committed to the delivery of high-quality water services for the people of Ireland, in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. We are committed to meeting our statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as the expectations of our service users and customers. We aim to provide a safe and reliable supply of drinking water and collect wastewater safely by protecting, maintaining and improving Ireland's water and wastewater services.

The standard of service provided to our domestic customers is set out in our Domestic Customer Charter, which is available on our website at <https://www.water.ie/our customer commitment>. This section of the website includes a number of other customer related documentation including our Domestic Communications Code of Practice.

We apply best practice in the preparation and implementation of Business Continuity and Crisis Management plans, which aim to minimise threats to the safety and wellbeing of customers and safeguard the provision of normal services and operations.

The protection of customer data is treated as highly important. All personal data of our customers is treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

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Respect for Communities

Uisce Éireann is committed to delivering improvements to water and wastewater services throughout Ireland where they are needed most urgently, based on a clearly defined set of priorities. We recognise that our activities may impact on local communities, however at all times we endeavour to respect their rights and interests while minimising those impacts where it is possible to do so. We aim to prevent and minimise disturbances associated with construction work carried out as part of upgrade, repair, maintenance and construction of Uisce Éireann's assets through positive engagement carried out with courtesy, dignity and respect.

Respect for the Environment


Uisce Éireann has a strategic objective to value and enhance our environment. We are committed to protecting the environment in all our activities and support Ireland's social and economic growth through appropriate investment in water services. We respect our responsibility to conserve and manage precious water resources and protect the wider environment by improving resilience and increasing the sustainability of the public water supply. Climate resilience is an integral part of our asset design, planning and delivery activities.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS DUE DILIGENCE

Uisce Éireann recognises that our operations may potentially impact on the human rights of our Staff, customers, affected communities and other stakeholders. We are committed to identifying, preventing and mitigating against negative impacts, where this is possible. To enable us to appropriately report on these activities an initial, independent Due Diligence Maturity Assessment has been completed. We intend to use that assessment as the basis for ongoing responsible reporting.

7. GRIEVANCE MECHANISM AND REMEDIATION

Uisce Éireann is committed to our 'We do the right thing' value and to upholding this, and all of our other values and behaviours, along our value chain. We strongly encourage the reporting of any concerns, by any party, regarding any potential or negative human rights impacts linked to either our own business activities or operations or any within our value chain.

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Internal Channels

Uisce Éireann is committed to providing an environment where every Staff member should feel free to raise concerns and issues arising in the workplace. We believe that every Staff member should have the right to raise concerns or issues relating to their employment which affect them personally. It is our intention to ensure that any such instances are dealt with fairly and promptly. Procedures for raising such issues are set out in the Uisce Éireann Grievance Policy.

In addition, we are fully committed to addressing any concerns or possible wrongdoing and we will, in line with the Uisce Éireann Protected Disclosures Policy, protect any staff member who, in good faith, reports such concerns.

External Channels

Uisce Éireann encourages customers, suppliers and local communities to contact us, through our confidential channels, if they have observed or suspect wrongdoing in contravention of this Policy. We will treat all communications appropriately, and with empathy and confidentiality.

Suppliers are encouraged to report any concerns in line with our Supplier Sustainability Charter, which is publicly accessible on our website <https://www.water.ie/about/procurement/>.

Customers and communities can contact us in a number of ways as set out on our website <https://www.water.ie/contact/>.


8. IMPLICATIONS OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE POLICY

Any individual who is under investigation for a suspected or confirmed breach of human rights may be suspended, pending the outcome of the investigation.

Where the allegations are substantiated, disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment may be taken in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

Individuals' constitutional right to natural justice and fair procedures will be upheld in accordance with all relevant legislation. In this regard, the provision of appropriate representation, if requested, will be considered.

Non-compliance with this Policy by any other party to whom it applies, may result in a recommendation to terminate their contract with Uisce Éireann or terminate the engagement of the individual(s), within that contracting entity, found to be in breach of the Policy.

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9. RESPONSIBILITY


The Executive team are committed to making the protection of human rights central to the business activities and operations of Uisce Éireann.

10. COMMUNICATING, MONITORING AND REVIEWING

This Policy will be communicated as appropriate and will be available on the Zone. All parties to whom this Policy applies will be requested to familiarise themselves with it and participate in training that is made available to them.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually.

Policy Owner	Asset Management & Sustainability Director
Policy Author	Senior Manager Sustainability Reporting & Policy Mngt
Amendments	n/a – new policy.

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