



# Armagh Observatory & Planetarium

## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

And

## Action Plan

April 2025 to March 2028



## 1.0 Introduction - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

1.1 Armagh Observatory & Planetarium (AOP) recognises the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion. We operate in an increasingly diverse community, and we understand that the people who provide and use our services have diverse characteristics and different experiences, needs and aspirations. AOP are currently Diversity Mark NI Bronze Award holders and are an Institute of Physics (IoP) Juno Practitioner.

1.2 Equality, diversity and inclusion are separate ideas which are very closely related.

**Equality** - we promote equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

**Diversity** - we accept each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity, and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together, we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders. A diverse workplace has employees with a wide variety of identities, backgrounds and abilities – some of these characteristics may not be visible, others will be very obvious.

**Inclusion** – we create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in an environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued and able to contribute. It is often referred to as creating a sense of belonging. A workplace with a strong sense of inclusion will make everyone feel as if they belong. One with a weaker sense of inclusion may result in some employees feeling as if they don't 'fit'.

When managed intentionally, EDI initiatives create an environment where people feel safe, have a sense of belonging and are able to reach their full potential. These principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are considered when HR policies are being developed and reviewed and when developing content to be used in our public buildings. This has included installing hearing loops, marking some of our Dome Shows as "Relaxed" or "Chilled" alongside ensuring our Planetarium is fully accessible with a dedicated sensory room and a Changing Places facility.

## 2.0 Policy Statement

2.1 AOP is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in respect of religious belief, political opinion, race, disability, age, sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, married or civil partnership and gender reassignment.

- 2.2 AOP is committed to a policy of promoting equality of opportunity, providing an inclusive workplace and eliminating any unfair treatment or unlawful discrimination. This applies to all employment policies and practices including those relating to:
- Recruitment and Selection,
  - Terms and conditions of employment;
  - Working environment;
  - Learning and development.

Whilst the focus of this Strategy & Action Plan is on equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, these principles also guide how AOP engages externally with visitors, stakeholders and members of the public who avail of our services and facilities.

### **3.0 Application**

- 3.1 We will seek to promote good practice across the range of our policies and in respect of all equality categories. This document will build on existing equality work undertaken by AOP and assist in meeting future equality requirements. The successful delivery of the strategy will require visible leadership and commitment across the organisation.
- 3.2 It is designed to be flexible and will be reviewed regularly, with the support of the staff and students of AOP. It is recognised that the timescale of the action plan may have to be amended in response to other work priorities and available resources.
- 3.3 AOP will provide the resources to ensure the implementation of the action plan. Targets resulting from the action plan can be incorporated into our Business Plans and will include reporting mechanisms to ensure that progress will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team on a regular basis.
- 3.4 AOP has appointed a Diversity Champion who will be an advocate for the importance of EDI; prompt and inform discussion of EDI at board level, advise and support staff working towards operational change and promote AOP's vision for equality, diversity and inclusion to relevant communities. The current Diversity Champion is the Head of Education & Outreach who will also act as the liaison between the EDI Committee and SMT.
- 3.5 The action plan will be related to our corporate planning and performance management processes and objectives. Also through the Physics Inclusion Award (Project Juno) and Diversity Mark NI we will ensure that EDI is implemented throughout all of AOP with staff and student buy in through the reviewed EDI Committee.

- 3.6 We already have systems in place for our equality monitoring practices so that we monitor employment and access to services on the basis of equality groups gender and community background. This information will be used to better promote equality of opportunity.
- 3.7 AOP's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is also demonstrated through policies currently in place, including:
- Equal Opportunities Policy
  - Flexible Working Policy
  - Hybrid Working Policy
  - Grievance Policy & Procedure
  - Disciplinary Policy & Procedure
  - Dignity at Work Policy
  - Code of Conduct for Staff & Students
  - Recruitment & Selection Policy and Procedure
  - Policy on Volunteers

#### **4.0 Aims & Objectives**

- 4.1 The aim of the Action Plan is to:
1. Ensure that AOP's employment and service provision policies meet legal requirements across all groups currently protected by employment equality legislation.
  2. Promote good equality practice across our range of policies in respect of all equality categories on a phased basis.
  3. Assist AOP to promote equality of opportunity in the workplace.
  4. Demonstrate visible leadership from senior management to staff on the importance of EDI in the workplace.
  5. To develop an employability strategy with the support of the Equality Commission.
  6. To develop examples of good practice which can be promoted on AOP's website and social media channels.
  7. Build on existing equality work undertaken by AOP and assist us to meet future equality requirements.
  8. Ensure the Strategy will take into consideration external AOP service delivery and outreach work.

4.2 AOP will undertake to meet the following objectives over the course of the three-year plan:

1. To develop a review schedule to audit existing employment and service provision policies and practice against the relevant Northern Ireland Equality Codes of Practice.
2. To action the implementation of any measures identified during the audit of each employment policy.
3. To co-ordinate ongoing monitoring, review and affirmative action commitments in relation to the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998.
4. To identify and implement appropriate and effective monitoring and review mechanisms for other equality grounds.
5. To develop and implement an action plan if any affirmative actions/ positive actions are identified through the equality monitoring and review mechanism in line with the ECNI Code of Practice.
6. To implement a programme of equality training and awareness across AOP.

## Action Plan 2025 - 2028

### 5.0 Policy & Practice Review

| Date (by)               | To have   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Year 1 – 2025/26</b> |   |
| <b>Quarter 1</b>        | To review and revise the Equal Opportunity Policy to ensure to all equality grounds are considered.   |
|                         | To develop a Customer Services Policy in respect of our goods, facilities and services  |
|                         | To review and revise the Bullying & Harassment Policy to ensure all equality grounds are considered.  |
|                         | To review and revise the Recruitment & Selection Policy to ensure all equality grounds are considered.  |
|                         | To review AOP policies for requirement to develop a Disability Reasonable Adjustment Policy.  |
|                         | EDI Committee to meet to discuss IoP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>        | To develop plans to put in place systems to monitor employment and access to services in relation to equality categories other than community background and sex. |
|                         | To look at the requirement to develop an employability strategy with Equality Commission support.   |
|                         | To review the Attendance Management Policy to ensure to all equality grounds are considered.  |
|                         | EDI Committee to meet to discuss IoP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |
|                         | Prepare Diversity Mark Annual Report  |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>        | To review the Grievance Policy to ensure to all equality grounds are considered.  |
|                         | EDI Committee to meet to discuss IoP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Quarter 4</b>        | To review the Disciplinary Policy to ensure to all equality grounds are considered.   |
|                         | To have completed the implementation of any measures identified in the policy audit schedule for the year. This will include the review of service provision i.e. customer services policy. |
|                         | EDI Committee to meet to discuss loP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |
| <b>Date (by)</b>        | <b>To Have</b>  |
| <b>Year 2 – 2026/27</b> |   |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>        | To work with the Equality Commission to identify good practice policy work that AOP can adopt.  |
|                         | To review the implementation of the AOP Equality Plan.  |
|                         | To work with the Equality Commission to promote the company's good practice initiatives.  |
|                         | EDI Committee to meet to discuss loP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |
|                         | Prepare Diversity Mark Annual Report  |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>        | To consider extending AOP's monitoring strategy.  |
|                         | EDI Committee to meet to discuss loP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |
| <b>Year 3 – 2027/28</b> |   |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>        | To work with the Equality Commission to identify good practice policy work that the AOP can adopt.  |
|                         | To review the implementation of the Equality Plan.  |
|                         | To work with the Equality Commission to promote AOP's good practice initiatives.  |
|                         | To review the effectiveness of AOP's employability strategy.  |
|                         | EDI Committee to meet to discuss loP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
|                  | Prepare Diversity Mark Annual Report  |
| <b>Quarter 3</b> | To consider extending AOP's monitoring strategy.  |
|                  | EDI Committee to meet to discuss IoP Inclusion Award activity and Diversity Mark requirements.  |
| <b>Quarter 4</b> | Plan for next 3 year action plan taking into consideration future staffing requirements, learning from Diversity Mark and IoP Inclusion considerations. |



## 6.0 Monitoring & Review

| Date (by)            | To have  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Year 1 - 2025</b> |  |
| <b>Quarter 1</b>     | To have completed the annual monitoring return in respect of community background and sex and submit to the Equality Commission.   |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>     | To have completed an annual review on equal opportunity in the workplace to be considered by the Senior Management Team.   |
|                      | To have met with the Equality Commission to discuss any issues arising from the annual review (if required).   |
| <b>Year 2 - 2026</b> |  |
| <b>Quarter 1</b>     | To have completed the annual monitoring return in respect of community background and sex and submit to the Equality Commission.   |
| <b>Quarter 4</b>     | To have completed an annual review on equal opportunity in the workplace to be considered by the Senior Management Team.   |
|                      | To have met with the Equality Commission to discuss any issues arising from the annual review (if necessary).  |
| <b>Year 3 - 2027</b> |  |
| <b>Quarter 1</b>     | To have completed the annual monitoring return in respect of community background and sex and submit to the Equality Commission.   |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>     | To have completed an annual review on equal opportunity in the work place to be considered by the Senior Management Team. <b>To include Triennial Article 55 Review.</b> |
| <b>Quarter 4</b>     | To have submitted Triennial Article 55 Review to the Equality Commission (if requested).   |
|                      | To have met with the Equality Commission to discuss any issues arising from the annual/triennial review (if necessary).  |

## 7.0 Affirmative Action

| Date (by)            | To have   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Year 1 - 2025</b> |   |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>     | To have identified any affirmative action measures required by ECNI following the ECNI annual review. |
|                      | To have agreed any actions identified with the Equality Commission if required.                       |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>     | To have implemented an affirmative action programme if required.                                      |
| <b>Year 2 – 2026</b> |   |
| <b>Ongoing</b>       | Review any affirmative action measures actioned.  |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>     | To have identified any changes to affirmative action measures required following annual review.       |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>     | To have agreed any actions identified with the Equality Commission.                                   |
| <b>Year 3 - 2027</b> |   |
| <b>Ongoing</b>       | Review any affirmative action measures actioned.  |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>     | To have identified any changes to affirmative action measures required following annual review.       |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>     | To have agreed any actions identified with the Equality Commission.                                   |

## 8.0 Training & Awareness

| Date (by)               | To have  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Year 1 – 2025/26</b> |  |
| <b>Ongoing</b>          | Equal opportunity awareness training for all new starts, to cover employment and access to services. |
| <b>Quarter 1</b>        | Fix date for internal communication to middle/senior management on equality updates.                 |
|                         | EDI training for Management Committee members (online)   |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>        | Middle/senior management training on equality awareness and service provision                        |
|                         | Middle/senior management training on recruitment & selection as required                             |
| <b>Quarter 3</b>        | Middle/senior management training on bullying & harassment.  |
| <b>Quarter 4</b>        | Middle/senior management training on general HR policies.  |
| <b>Year 2 – 2026/27</b> |  |
| <b>Ongoing</b>          | Equal opportunity awareness training for all new starts.   |
| <b>Quarter 1</b>        | Fixed date for internal communication to Middle/Senior Management.                                   |
|                         | Middle/senior management training – general equality update.   |
|                         | Middle/senior management training on recruitment & selection as required                             |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>        | Training update for all staff on equality.   |
| <b>Year 3 – 2027/28</b> |  |
| <b>Ongoing</b>          | Equal opportunity awareness training for all new starts.   |
| <b>Quarter 1</b>        | Fixed date for internal communication to Middle/Senior Management.                                   |
|                         | Middle/senior management training – general equality update.   |
| <b>Quarter 2</b>        | Training update for all staff on equality.   |