



Irish Association of Youth Orchestras

Policy Control Document

To be attached preceding the front cover of all hard and soft-copies of the policy.

Policy Name: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Irish Association of Youth Orchestras
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

June 2024

Irish Association of Youth Orchestras

Our Mission

The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras promotes and fosters the development of youth orchestras in Ireland.

Our Vision

We envision an Ireland where all young people have the opportunity to experience the joy of ensemble music-making.

Our Aims

- Build and strengthen the community of youth orchestras.
- Provide and facilitate advice and information for youth orchestras.
- Foster excellence through provision of training and resources.
- Promote best practice artistically and in working with young people.
- Offer and facilitate performance and collaboration opportunities.
- Present excellence in the youth orchestra movement to a wider and more diverse public.
- Encourage collaboration between all stakeholders in the development of youth orchestras.
- Act as a connection between youth orchestras in Ireland and the movement internationally.

Irish Association of Youth Orchestras

Our Values

Community: We value creative communal expression and unite all our stakeholders in the joy of music by creating spaces for networking, peer-learning and shared musical experiences at every opportunity.

Diversity: We welcome all people and embrace the diversity of contemporary Ireland.

Enjoyment: We place fun, personal fulfilment and celebration at the core of all our work.

Equality: We believe that all young people should have the opportunity to practice musicianship and access instrumental training.

Excellence: We encourage every young person to reach the highest potential that they aspire and commit to.

Integrity: We are transparent, honest and professional in all aspects of our work. We treat all people with respect, dignity and courtesy at all times.

Partnership: We value partnership with like-minded organisations that share or embody our values.

Sustainability: We value environmental sustainability and will reflect sustainable practices in our work.

Youth Participation: We put young people at the centre of our work, striving towards a partnership with them in our activities.

Irish Association of Youth Orchestras

Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We at the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras envision an Ireland where every young person who so wishes can learn musicianship skills and participate in ensemble music-making. Within our resources and mandate, we are committed to playing our part in making that vision a reality.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion will see the creation of this policy and an accompanying plan for implementation of the policy and the inclusion of the commitments made in our day-to-day work with our member orchestras and in our own direct work with young people.

In implementing our policy and plan, we are committed to a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. The policy will be reviewed annually by our Board and our Youth Voice Subcommittee, recognising what we have achieved or failed to achieve and incorporating what we have learned into our future policy and plans.

Context

Under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified by Ireland in 1992, every child and young person has the right to freedom of expression, to freely express their views in all matters affecting themselves and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.¹ In adopting the convention, the Irish government has committed to the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural and artistic activity.

Furthermore, the Irish government has adopted a ‘public sector duty’ whereby “public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of staff and people availing of their services”.

As a publicly-funded organisation, the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras (IAYO) has embarked on the process of meeting the public sector duty and incorporating it into our work.

While there are legal commitments made by government with regard to cultural access, in reality, with regard to music, foundational musicianship education is not consistently delivered in Irish schools and most instrumental music lessons are fee-based as is most participation in youth orchestras and ensembles. There is compelling evidence that cost is a barrier to participation in youth orchestras and ensembles as well as the other resources required by young people to participate: transport, parental availability and the ability and willingness of parents to facilitate participation.

¹ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Ratified by Ireland, 1992: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

Data published by the Arts Council in 2023 notes that a large proportion of children and young people would like to engage in more music and would like to participate in cultural activities, particularly through school.² This report also notes that embarrassment, bullying and peer pressure create other barriers to arts participation for children and young people.

The recently-published Arts Council policies on Music and on Children and Young People's Arts both make clear commitments to advocate for greater access to the development of artistic skills in schools, a position for which IAYO has advocated for some time.

Our Actions

It is in this context that in our fulfilment of our commitment to equality, the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras will primarily focus on the young people who are in front of us: those who can and do access our activities and services and those of our member organisations.

We will:

- Promote the rights of young people who are already part of the IAYO community, most particularly in raising the voices and profile of young people in our work and facilitating them to influence how we carry out our work;
- Focus on the diversity and safety of our staff, board and volunteers and of those who work in our community.
- Engage, within our remit and resources, in promoting the benefits of music and ensemble participation for young people, supporting initiatives for greater access to music education and facilitating young people in advocating themselves for greater access to music education;
- Work not only to embed the values of equality, diversity and inclusion in IAYO itself but also to lead our community by example in making commitments and implementing best practice.

Following adoption of this policy, we will put in place an action plan to realise our commitments over time and will review and update that plan on an annual basis.

² Report on Children, Young People and the Arts, Arts Council 2023:

https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/Arts_in_Ireland/Young_people_children_and_education/Report_on_Children_Young_People_and_the_Arts.pdf

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The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee registered in Ireland.

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