

National Savings & Investments DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

Introduction

From 4 December 2006 there will be a new statutory duty on the public sector to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people (The Disability Equality Duty). This is a requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended in 2005, (the Act).

In particular, when carrying out its functions, NS&I is under statutory duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons; and
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.

These objectives are together known as "the general duty" to promote disability equality.

Observance of this duty should make disability equality central to the way in which public authorities (such as NS&I) work, in:

- policy making;
- service delivery; and
- employment practice.

The specific duties require NS&I to publish a Disability Equality Scheme, to implement certain aspects of the Scheme and to report on the Scheme.

This document aims to explain the main elements of NS&I's Disability Equality Scheme and sets out our arrangements for meeting the general and specific statutory duties.

What Is a Disability Equality Scheme?

A Disability Equality Scheme details the specific steps that NS&I is taking to ensure it can meet the objectives that comprise the general duty.

In particular, a Disability Equality Scheme states:

- NS&I role and remit as an organisation and its impact on the Equality Duty;
- the ways in which disabled people have been involved in the development of the Scheme;
- the methods for assessing the impact of policies and practices, or the likely impact of proposed policies and practices, on equality for disabled persons;
- the proposed steps towards the fulfilment of the general duty;
- the arrangements for gathering information on the effect of policies and practices on disabled persons and in particular, arrangements for gathering information on:
 - their effect on the recruitment, development and retention of NS&I's disabled employees;
 - the extent to which the services provided and other functions performed take account of the needs of disabled persons; and
- the arrangements for making use of such information to assist it in the performance of the general duty and in particular, the arrangements for:
 - reviewing on a regular basis the effectiveness of the steps referred to above; and
 - preparing subsequent schemes.

The Disability Equality Scheme will be kept under review and will be revised and updated at least once every year.

National Savings & Investments

NS&I's vision is to be recognised as the UK's leading and most trusted savings and investments organisation. To achieve this objective is to provide retail funds for the Government that are cost effective in relation to funds raised on the wholesale market.

NS&I is a small Executive Agency of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, NS&I is an integral part of the government's debt management arrangements responsible for providing financing by issuing and selling savings and investment instruments to the public.

Key Responsibilities for the Disability Equality Scheme

The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring that NS&I fulfils its obligations under the legislation, achieves its equality and diversity targets and that actions set out in the scheme are undertaken.

NS&I's Executive Management Team and Board will review information as part of an annual assessment, and reports on progress will be included in HR Annual Board Report each year.

Day-to-day responsibility for managing and overseeing the Disability Equality Scheme has been delegated to Directors, HR teams and our Diversity Champions.

Diversity Champions are a group of individual representatives with the organisation, who have responsibility for diversity issues, promotion and awareness within NS&I.

All NS&I employees have a responsibility to contribute to, and promote, an environment free from unfair discrimination and bullying.

Line managers have additional responsibilities to:

- make staff aware of NS&I's equal opportunities policy and procedures;
- ensure new staff attend diversity awareness training within six months of joining;
- be alert for any signs of discrimination, taking prompt action to resolve such matters at an early stage; and
- identify any special training and development needs for staff from under-represented groups such as ethnic minority groups, women, or people with disabilities.

Active communication of policies and procedures relating to diversity and equal opportunities within NS&I. Disability is a key aspect of our diversity policy. This is communicated to all staff through formal induction to all new employees, continual access of all policies on our online Employee Handbook based on the intranet and promotion through Diversity Workshops.

The Disability Equality Scheme is monitored by HR, in association with the Diversity Champions.

NS&I is committed to the fulfilment of its statutory responsibility as set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) Regulations 2005 in the performance of all its functions, powers, and duties, including the procurement of goods and service, and will ensure that all NS&I's employees are aware of their statutory duty.

Impact Assessment for NS&I

1. NS&I ensures that provision of our financial products are accessible to disabled people through our distribution partners
2. NS&I will identify those of its policies and practices, which, as an employer, it considers could affect equality for disabled persons and will review these on an ongoing basis. Priorities for these reviews will be considered and agreed annually.
3. In each case NS&I aims to ensure that its policies and practices are consistent with both the general and specific duties provided for by legislation.
4. NS&I will conduct assessments based on existing knowledge and information, allowing it to come to a view of whether a policy or practice under consideration will have a disproportionate or unintentional impact on equality for disabled persons. If it appears possible a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
5. NS&I will continue to comply with all appropriate legislative requirements for building accessibility to all NS&I property and where appropriate NS&I will instigate changes required to allow easier access to its property.

NS&I Equal Opportunities Policy

NS&I is committed to equality of opportunity in all its employment practices, policies and procedures. No employee or potential employee will therefore receive less favourable treatment due to their race, creed, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, age, language, religion, political or other opinion affiliation, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status, connections with a national minority, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, family connections, working pattern, membership or non membership of a trade union or, unless justifiable, disability.

Involvement of Disabled Persons

We aim to consult with disabled staff, local disabled community, wider government and if appropriate, with the financial services industry, in relation to this Scheme and on an ongoing basis.

Action Plan

The Action Plan can be found in Annex A summarises the steps and methods that NS&I proposes to take in the next three years to ensure compliance with the general equality duty.

Arrangements for Gathering Information

The Action Plan specifies NS&I's proposed arrangements for gathering information on the effect of its policies and practices on disabled persons without limitation.

For example, we will in partnership with our retained recruitment consultants, continue to develop our capability to capture recruitment and selection information and we will also continue to develop how we monitor our promotion procedures and similarly how we deal with leavers.

Arrangements for Making use of Information

The Action Plan specifies NS&I's proposed arrangements for making use of information gathered in order to promote equality of opportunity without limitation.

For example, we will using monitoring of our recruitment and selection process to remove any identified barriers to people with a disability and similarly for promoting people internally, using analysis of our data to ensure all candidates have equality of opportunity.

Annual Reporting

On an annual basis, NS&I will publish a report containing a summary of:

- the steps it has taken to fulfil its disability equality duty;
- the results of information gathering carried out;
- how the information gathered has been used;

Complaints or Enquiries about NS&I's Disability Equality Scheme

If you have a complaint or enquiry about this Disability Equality Scheme you should contact any member of the HR team via:

- Email: HR@nsandi.com
- Phone: 020 7348 9200
- Or write to: HR Team, National Savings & Investments, 375 Kensington High Street, London, W14 8SD

Hard copies of the Scheme can be obtained by contacting HR team.