

# **Equal Opportunities Policy**

**Issued by : Human Resources Directorate**

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# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

## 1. PURPOSE

To promote equal treatment for all employees or potential employees irrespective of 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; and that this is managed in such a way that the Agency complies with and goes beyond the Equal Opportunities legislation and Codes of Practice.

## 2. SCOPE

All established and temporary employees as well as all job applicants. This policy has particular relevance to recruitment and appointments, development, training and appraisal procedures and/or decisions.

## 3. POLICY STATEMENT

National Savings and Investments (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.

## 4. JOB DESIGN

The design of jobs, working hours and related practices should not discriminate directly or indirectly against certain groups of applicants. As vacancies arise or directorates are restructured the requirements of individual jobs will be reviewed and redesigned where necessary in order to ensure the broadest possible catchment of essential recruits of suitable calibre.

NS&I recognises the need to be able to offer, where appropriate, flexible working patterns such as job share, part-time working and/or partial home working where an individual has a need to reduce their working hours or change their working pattern. These methods of working will be positively considered subject to business needs.

## 5. ADVERTISEMENTS

All vacancies will normally be advertised within NS&I in order to provide an equal opportunity for all interested persons to apply. All external recruitment will be conducted under the terms of the Recruitment Policy. Applications will be encouraged from all suitably qualified individuals and, where appropriate, particular emphasis will be placed upon encouraging applications from those who may be currently under represented in the workforce.

An exception to the above applies when special arrangements are made for the redeployment of personnel who would otherwise be at risk of redundancy. All advertisements, whether internal or external, must be approved by HR after discussion with the line manager recruiting for the vacancy.

## **6. RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENTS**

Application Forms have been designed in order to obtain all the necessary information to provide the basis for an equitable and instructive interview and for the screening and selection of applicants. Personal details which are not necessary for a recruitment decision to be made - such as race or creed are therefore not specified. Additional details of this nature will be needed for recording and monitoring purposes and as such will be kept by the HR department on a separate confidential form.

All those concerned with recruitment will receive training in interviewing skills and equal opportunities. Prior to the selection process beginning managers will in discussion with HR define the selection criteria ensuring that they are related to the job requirement and are not unlawfully discriminatory.

Applicants are to be advised when invited for interview that this is an "equal opportunity interview" and if they are uncertain about the purpose of any question which they might believe to be intrusive they should ask for clarification before feeling any need to respond.

NS&I shall not insist upon higher education or professional qualifications other than those which are required for the job. In assessing qualifications it will not be assumed that overseas diplomas or degrees are of a lower standard than their UK equivalents. Wherever possible experience may count as an equivalent to professional qualifications the requirements for which will then be waived wherever possible.

All appointments will be made solely on merit, regardless of 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, membership or non membership of a trade union or, unless justifiable, disability.

## **7. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT**

- a. All individuals should receive training on the application of the Equal Opportunities Policy – this training should include:
  - an explanation of what the policy means to NS&I and to all employees;
  - an explanation of the forms discrimination can take (direct, indirect, victimisation and segregation);
  - guidance on the dangers of generalised assumptions and prejudices.
- b. NS&I training programmes will be designed to support the aims of the Equal Opportunities Initiatives. Stereotyping, prejudice or any other form of discrimination will be eliminated from all internal courses. Every effort will be made to select external courses which also meet these requirements.

- c. The criteria for selecting individuals for development and training opportunities must be non-discriminatory. These will be based upon the individuals' merits and abilities, business needs and the availability of appropriate work related courses. Whenever practicable training will be arranged so that all categories of employees may attend e.g. part-timers, however, where it is clear that the workforce is under-represented, by racial group or gender, training opportunities will be offered to members of that group in order to develop their skills and better equip them to apply for other jobs within NS&I.
- d. All individuals will be appraised at least annually and there will be positive encouragement to discuss suitable development and training opportunities.

## **8. REDUNDANCY & REDEPLOYMENT**

With reference to the appropriate policies the selection for redundancy and/or redeployment must be conducted in a manner which avoids any direct or indirect discrimination. Specific statutory protection applies to individuals who are either pregnant, on maternity leave or are nursing mothers.

## **9. OTHER POLICIES**

- 9.1 All NS&I policies, pay, hours of work, unsocial hours, performance appraisal scheme, disciplinary procedure and benefits are designed to promote equal potential and protection for all employees. The application and impact of these policies will be monitored and if barriers to equality of opportunity are identified appropriate remedial action to overcome them will be taken.
- 9.2 NS&I is also committed to ensuring that it recognises cross cultural differences. To this end the Agency acknowledges different religious/festival requirements and aims to take steps to accommodate reasonable requests for annual leave during such periods.

## **10. MONITORING**

Whilst all Application Forms will be designed only to ask relevant questions, a separate questionnaire will be provided in order to allow for confidential monitoring to take place. This monitoring will apply to ethnic origin, disability, gender and age. The resultant statistics will be kept by HR who will consider them to identify where change is necessary or training is needed.

## **11. COMMUNICATION**

The details of this policy will be communicated to all current employees and new starters. All job applicants may also receive details of the policy upon request. Where necessary any communication initiative will take account of literacy difficulties and communication disabilities.

## **12. ADHERENCE TO POLICY**

It is the responsibility of managers to:

- ensure that the minimum standards established within this policy are adhered to within their area of responsibility.

All individuals, at every level, must:

- co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity;
- report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices;
- not induce or attempt to induce others to practice unlawful discrimination;
- not victimise anyone as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination;
- not harass, abuse or intimidate others on account of their race, gender etc.;
- not canvass job applicants in an attempt to discourage them from applying or taking up a post.

Any breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure. Serious offences, such as harassment, will be dealt with as gross misconduct.

### **13. GRIEVANCES**

Any individual who has a concern regarding the application of this policy should normally make use of NS&I grievance procedure. (Where there is a concern regarding harassment the particular procedure contained within the Harassment Policy should be followed).

Any prospective employee may request a copy of this policy and submit any grievance, which must be in writing, to HR within 14 days of any alleged incident. An investigation will then be conducted and the individual will receive a written report as to the outcome.

### **14. RESPONSIBILITY**

All those individuals referred to within the scope of this policy are required to adhere to its terms and conditions. They must understand that this policy is also incorporated into their contract of employment.

Individual managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is applied within their own area. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy must be discussed with HR prior to any action being taken.

HR has the responsibility for ensuring the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy. Revisions, amendments or alterations to the policy can only be implemented following consideration and approval by HR.