



Employment Equality of Opportunity

Version 1

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1. Statement of Policy

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Chief Executive, Board and Senior Management Team to the promotion of opportunity in and by the NIGALA.

It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Having or not having dependents
- Religious belief or political opinion
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Real or suspected infection by disease.

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All job applicants, employees and others who work for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Further to this the BSO will provide employment equality for all irrespective of trade union membership. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful discrimination and on the basis of merit. Merit is defined as `the person who best meets the requirements of the post on the basis of education, qualification, experience or aptitude` for work, training or benefit.

We recognise that the provision of equality of opportunity in the workplace is not only good management practice; it also makes sound business sense. Our Equality of Opportunity Policy will help all those who work for us to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be utilised fully to maximise the effectiveness of the organisation.

2. Equality Commitments

We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- Complying with our own equality of opportunity policy and associated policies
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- Regarding all breaches of equality of opportunity policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

The NIGALA is fully committed to the effective promotion of equality of opportunity, to support the creation of a workplace that is characterised by equality and welcoming of cultural diversity, and to assist in creating a harmonious working environment where all employees can contribute to their full capacity.

3. Implementation

The Chief Executive has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. The day-to-day responsibility for implementing the policy rests with the Head of Corporate Services. Each manager also has responsibilities and we expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants and relevant others (such as contract or temporary/agency workers);
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the Equality of Opportunity Policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff;
- Provide equality/diversity training and guidance as appropriate, including training on induction and management courses;

- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques;
- Regularly update staff on equality issues through a variety of communication channels e.g. staff newsletters, intranet);
- Obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our workforce;
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

4. Monitoring and Review

We will seek to have in place and to regularly review monitoring systems to assess the effective implementation of our Equality of Opportunity Policy and are committed to taking action as necessary. For example, where monitoring identifies an under-representation of a particular group or groups, we shall develop an action plan to address the imbalance.

5. Complaints

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through our internal Grievance Procedure, or the Working Well Together Policy (for complaints of harassment). Copies of these procedures are available from sharepoint and the NIGALA website. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Employees have a right to seek the support of their Trade Unions.

In addition to our internal procedures, employees have the right to pursue complaints of discrimination to an Industrial Tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal under the following anti-discrimination legislation:

- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, as amended
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended
- Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, as amended
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003
- Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, as amended
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006

(Please note, employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal will normally be required to raise their complaint under our internal grievance/harassment procedures first.)

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees who make complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

7. Equality Screening

Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these.

This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and has no serious impact on Section 75 groups.