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## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY**

### **STATEMENT**

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Board of Directors and Senior Management Team to the promotion of equality of opportunity in NØW.

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

The above list is not exhaustive.

### **WHO DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO?**

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.

Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice; it also makes sound business sense. This Equal Opportunities applies to all those who work for NØW and will help them to develop their full potential, and the talents and resources of the workforce will be utilised fully to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

### **EQUALITY COMMITMENTS**

The NØW Project is committed to recruiting and retaining the highest calibre staff and is committed to:

- ❖ Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- ❖ Promoting a good harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect

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- ❖ 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 equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- ❖ Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- ❖ Regarding all breaches of equal opportunities policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Executive Director has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy and for its regular review. NØW's Management Team has day-to-day responsibility in this area. Every Director, Manager and supervisor has responsibility in his/her own area, and every staff member has a responsibility to abide by the policy to create the environment of employment equality, which is the objective of the policy.

While NØW endeavours through policy, procedure and practice to strengthen and maintain a workplace culture where harassment or discrimination is regarded by all as unacceptable it cannot achieve this by working in isolation. NØW therefore expects all managers and staff to actively support initiatives designed to deliver this objective.

Intimidation, victimisation or harassment in any form is an offence of gross misconduct, which may warrant dismissal.

NØW will provide equal opportunity for all job applicants and employees. All recruitment, promotion and training decisions will be based upon an individual's ability and job performance and will exclude any consideration of religion, age, gender, nationality, class, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. Similarly NØW will exclude any such considerations in its dealings with volunteers, trainees, clients, staff of other agencies, professionals and visitors. Harassment, victimisation or discrimination practised by any member of staff, volunteer or trainee will not be tolerated. Any such activity will be regarded as gross misconduct with appropriate disciplinary action to follow.

### 1.1 Recruitment and Selection.

NØW's policy on Recruitment and Selection is laid out in our Recruitment and Selection Handbook and is as follows:

- 1.1 Application forms: NØW will require candidate's to complete application forms.
- 1.2 Job Descriptions and Personnel Specifications will be devised for each vacancy.

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1.3 Interviews will be conducted by a minimum of 3 interviewers who will record reasons for all recruitment decisions. References and a Police Records Check are carried out on all successful candidates. Where possible interview panels should be balanced in terms of gender and religion.

1.4 Only relevant and job related tests will be used to assist in certain cases to objectively assess certain candidates.

## 2 Monitoring.

2.1 NØW will monitor the perceived religious affiliation of existing staff, new staff and potential applicants. Such monitoring will be undertaken by the organisation's Monitoring Officer and the information will **not** be available to other personnel.

## 3 Working Environment.

3.1 The organisation will provide a working environment free from any flags, emblems, posters, graffiti or other material likely to be a safety hazard, provocative, offensive, intimidating or in any way likely to cause discomfort or unease for any employee, client or visitor to the organisation.

## 4 Breaches of the Equal Opportunity Policy.

4.1 Employees committing breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary procedures of the organisation. Anyone who feels they have been treated unfavourably by a manager, colleague or by anyone else should, where appropriate, use the grievance procedure.

## 5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

5.1 We will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of our equal opportunities policy.

5.2 The effectiveness of our equal opportunities policy will be reviewed annually and action taken as necessary.

## 6. COMPLAINTS

6.1 Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through NØW's Grievance Procedure. A copy of these procedures can be found in the Staff Handbook (Appendix 3). All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

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6.2 In additional 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
- ❖ 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.

However, all employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal will normally be required to raise their complaint under our internal grievance 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.