



Equal Opportunities in Employment: Information for Employees

Please contact Human Resources or your Trade Union Representative if you wish to discuss any issue that is covered by these guidelines.

These guidelines apply to all employees of the NPS Group.

Key Statement:

It is the policy of NPS Group to ensure that all its employees are selected, trained and promoted on the basis of ability, the requirements of the job and other similar non-discriminatory criteria. All employment decisions are based only on relevant and objective criteria.

Putting policy into practice:

The Group recognises that while its key statement sets out a major objective, this has to be turned into action. The following notes set out in broad terms the various measures it takes on this. The law specifically says that when the NPS Group appoint individuals to jobs, they must do this on the basis of merit.

The Group is committed to ensuring that no unlawful discrimination occurs on the grounds of:

- ethnic or national origin,
- race, colour, or nationality,
- sex or marital status,
- gender reassignment,
- spent criminal convictions,
- trade union membership or non-membership,
- disability,
- sexual orientation,
- age,
- religion or belief.

Discrimination can take various forms:

Direct discrimination is to treat a person less favourably on the grounds of, for example, ethnic/national origin, sex or marital status, than others (to whom these grounds do not apply) would be treated in the same or similar circumstances.

Indirect discrimination often occurs unintentionally, but is unlawful whether intentional or not. It involves some sort of provision, criterion or practice being required of job applicants, for example, the ability to be mobile, work irregular hours, or possess particular skills or experience. If the requirement could be complied with more easily by one group of people, than another, (for example, by men more easily than by women) then it has a discriminatory effect. Such an effect might have to be accepted if the requirement properly arose out of the nature of the job, but if it did not then it would constitute unlawful indirect discrimination.

Victimisation occurs if someone is treated less favourably than another, because they have made an allegation of unlawful discrimination.

Harassment occurs when someone's actions or words are unwelcome and violate another person's dignity, or create an environment, which is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive.

Discrimination against people with a disability occurs when assumptions concerning the disability are made, without consulting the person involved, when reasonable adjustments to the working environment are not fully considered, and when more importance is placed on disability than on ability.

The law on discrimination allows:

- some special treatment for women relating to pregnancy,
- special training to redress under-representation of a particular gender or racial group in parts of a workforce,
- direct discrimination on grounds of age to comply with legislative requirements eg working time regulations.
- employers to discriminate on the grounds of sex and race in the selection of jobs where there is a Genuine Occupational Requirement that necessitates the individual being of a specific sex, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation or religion.

How you can expect to be treated?

Discrimination should not occur in any employment procedures, except in those areas detailed in the law on discrimination allows. To ensure that you are not discriminated against we monitor employment procedures.

Recruitment and Selection

You should not be discriminated against in recruitment and selection procedures. To ensure that discrimination does not occur, we provide advice and training for managers on good recruitment and selection practices.

Promotion, Transfer and Redeployment

You should not be discriminated against when applying for promotion. To ensure that discrimination does not occur we follow a policy that all selection criteria must be non-discriminatory and promotion decisions should be based only on merit and ability. You

must be given an equal opportunity, and where appropriate special training should be given to assist career progression. In addition we apply the principle that there must be no limits placed on the number of people from disadvantaged groups employed in any section or department.

You should be treated fairly and not discriminated against in transfers and redeployment.

Training and Development

When managers select employees for training or development programmes, they must be selected on the basis of merit and ability only. You must be given an equal opportunity to access training, however, it is acceptable to provide training that seeks to redress the under-representation of certain groups within the workforce.

Unfair or discriminatory treatment

If you believe you have been treated unfairly under the terms of the policy on Equal Opportunities in Employment you may raise the matter through the Grievance procedure.

Because the Group does not tolerate harassment and bullying in the workplace, separate arrangements dealing with these are in place, and you are strongly encouraged to report incidents of harassment and bullying.

You have a right to respect in the carrying out of your duties for the Group. The Group does not tolerate harassment and discrimination of its employees from members of the public. If you experience this, you should draw it to the attention of your manager. A policy is in place to support you and your manager in dealing with it.

Responsibility for the Policy

As an employee you have a responsibility for making Equal Opportunities work within the Group. You are expected to respect other employees and to behave in an acceptable and lawful way towards colleagues.

Work-life Balance

The NPS Group encourages you to maintain an appropriate balance between your work and private life. This encouragement comes in part through providing employment policies aimed specifically at allowing you to achieve this balance. You are also encouraged to discuss individual needs with your manager. Everyone has a life and responsibilities outside work. We may have children or caring responsibilities, or want time to pursue other interests. Finding a way to accommodate this can make a real difference to both employees and employers. We need to be aware of our own stress levels and well-being, and to support other employees who may be experiencing pressure.

The Group has a range of employment initiatives and policies designed to help you balance your life, such as:

- career breaks,
- flexible working (within service requirements),

- maternity pay and leave provisions,
- study unrelated to work,
- job share and part-time working,
- home working (if appropriate),
- special leave for compassionate or caring responsibilities, study or even travel.
(Some of these are paid provisions. Others are unpaid.)

Additional support for staff

Well-being at work can be affected by what is happening inside and outside the working environment. The NPS Group subscribes to a counselling service for use by their employees. This is the BUPA Employee Assistance scheme, which is a confidential, free, counselling service, with 24-hour coverage, 7 days a week. It gives employees who may be troubled the opportunity to talk with a counsellor and obtain support and advice on a wide range of work related or personal issues. Arrangements can be made for an employee to see a counsellor for up to five sessions. For further details please contact your HR Section.

For the BUPA Employee Assistance scheme, freephone 0800 269 616