

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. NILGOSC is committed to providing equal opportunity and fair participation in employment for all persons. It will promote a good and harmonious working environment in which staff will be treated with dignity and respect and will not discriminate unlawfully against or harass any person on the grounds of:
 - Gender (including gender reassignment)
 - Marital or civil partnership status
 - Pregnancy, maternity or other parental leave
 - Having or not having dependants
 - Religious belief (or similar philosophical belief)
 - Political opinion
 - Disability
 - Race¹ or ethnic origin
 - Sexual orientation
 - Age
- 1.2. NILGOSC will ensure that its workplace and employment policies and practices do not unreasonably exclude or disadvantage job applicants and employees who have disabilities. To this end, NILGOSC will comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments in relation to such persons. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful discrimination and on the basis of aptitude and ability.
- 1.3. NILGOSC recognises that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice; it also makes sound business sense. The Equal Opportunities Policy will help all employees to develop to their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- 1.4. This Equal Opportunities Policy applies to all those who work for (or apply to work for) NILGOSC including employees, contract workers, those on work placement and Committee members.
- 1.5. Breaches of this policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

2. Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1. The Secretary has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy and will provide leadership in all matters relating to equality.
- 2.2. All employees are expected to abide by the policy, treat each other with dignity and respect, not commit any acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment against any other person and help create a good and harmonious working environment.
- 2.3. Staff should discourage discrimination and harassment by making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable and by supporting colleagues who suffer such treatment. Any employee who is aware of any incident of discrimination and harassment should alert a supervisor or manager.

¹ Throughout this document the word "race" is to be understood, in line with the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order, to include colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. Irish Travellers are recognised by the Order as being members of a racial group.

2.4. Managers and supervisors should:

- ensure that all complaints of discrimination or harassment are dealt with promptly, seriously and confidentially and in accordance with internal procedures;
- set a good example by treating staff with fairness, dignity and respect; and
- be alert to unacceptable behaviour and take appropriate action to stop it.

2.5. In order to implement this policy, NILGOSC will ensure that:

- the policy is communicated to all employees through issue with employment contracts, induction training, inclusion in the staff documents and guides section of the Intranet and made known to job applicants.
- managers, supervisors and staff are aware of their responsibilities, the types of misconduct likely to be unlawful at work, and the value of diversity in the workplace through appropriate and regular training/e-learning (including training for those involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion).
- appropriate duties in respect of implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy are incorporated into job descriptions and objectives for all staff.
- appropriate policy consultation will take place i.e. on policy introduction and when any significant amendments are made.
- adequate resources are made available to fulfil the aims of this policy.
- all incidents of discrimination and harassment are monitored and the effectiveness of this policy is reviewed periodically.

3. Monitoring and Review

3.1. NILGOSC is registered with the Equality Commission for the purposes of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. As such it is obliged to monitor the community background and gender of our job applicants and staff. NILGOSC is also obliged to review the composition of staff and employment policy practices every three years and, where appropriate, to consider taking affirmative action² to promote fair participation between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities. NILGOSC is committed to complying with these duties and has set up suitable arrangements to ensure that it does so.

3.2. In addition, and in line with our Equality Scheme (drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998), NILGOSC also monitors and reviews job applicants and staff in relation to the following equality characteristics: racial group, disability, sexual orientation, political opinion, age, marital or civil partnership status and dependants/caring responsibilities.

² Affirmative Action - where appropriate, lawful positive action measures such as special encouragement in advertisements or special training will be developed. These measures are available to NILGOSC in certain circumstances, for example, where there is an under-representation of a particular group in specific areas of work.

4. Complaints

- 4.1. Employees have a right to work in a good and harmonious environment that is free from discrimination and harassment and to complain about such behaviour should it occur. Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures. A copy of the Dignity at Work Policy and the Grievance Policy and Procedure can be found in the staff policies and guides section of the Intranet or can be obtained from Human Resources. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.
- 4.2. These internal procedures do not replace or detract from the right of employees to pursue complaints to an Industrial Tribunal or to a Fair Employment Tribunal. Those wishing to read the various definitions of discrimination (direct and indirect, victimisation and harassment) should refer to NILGOSC's Dignity at Work Policy or the Equality Commission website www.equalityni.org or the Labour Relations Agency website.³
- 4.3. Employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal will normally be required to raise their complaint under the NILGOSC internal grievance procedures in the first instance.⁴
- 4.4. Every effort will be made to ensure that employees making 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.

5. Operative and Review Date

- 5.1. The policy was last reviewed and updated in April 2024 and will be due for review again in April 2027.

³ LRA definitions of discrimination and harassment [Search | Labour Relations Agency - Official \(lra.org.uk\)](#) and [Harassment and Bullying at Work - Promoting an Inclusive Workplace \(lra.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ For further information on the statutory disciplinary, dismissal and grievance procedures, see www.lra.org.uk. For details of NILGOSC Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures please refer to the staff documents and guides section of the Intranet.