

3.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 Statement of Commitment

Housing Rights Service is committed to the principle of social justice and opposes discrimination on the grounds of religious belief and/or political opinion; gender, gender identity, marital or family status; nationality; race (i.e. colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin); disability; sexual orientation or age.

3.2 Responsibilities

The organisation is responsible for ensuring adequate resources are made available to implement this policy and to promote equal opportunities within the workplace.

The Director is responsible for ensuring this principle is observed in all organisational activities, policies and procedures.

The Business Support Manager is responsible for ensuring the equal opportunities policy is effectively implemented within Housing Rights Service and for regularly reviewing the policy in line with legislative requirements and good practice.

All employees have a personal responsibility to actively implement equal opportunities practices within the workplace.

3.3 Equal Opportunities Policies

Detailed policies aimed at promoting equality of opportunity have been developed within the following key areas

Recruitment & Selection(*see Sections P1&P2 of Policy &Procedural Manual*)
Harassment in the Workplace(*see Section P8 of Policy &Procedural Manual*)

Staff are required to make themselves conversant with the contents of each of these policies and to ensure they act in accordance with these and paragraph 2.2 of the Staff Code of Conduct at all times.

3.4 Flexible Working Practices

This policy is designed to assist in fulfilling Housing Rights Service commitment to equality of opportunity by providing a more flexible system of attendance for staff. Implementation of the policy is subject to the guiding and over riding principle that this flexibility should be achieved without adversely affecting the overall efficiency of the service or on service to clients.

There are 3 main components to this policy:

- Flexible working hours
- Part time working
- Career Breaks

A scheme of flexible working hours operates for all employees (subject to the details of the scheme as laid out in the Staff Handbook Appendix A). Requests for part time working or for a career break will be considered taking into account the needs of both the individual and the organisation. Approval for such a request will be at the discretion of the Management Committee and subject to the recommendation of the Director.

3.4.1 Flexible Working Hours

Details of this scheme are contained in the Staff Handbook (Appendix A *Flexible Working Hours*).

3.4.2 Part time working

To actively promote equal opportunity within the organisation, the Service will consider applications from members of staff to work either for a fixed or indefinite period on a part time basis.

Any member of staff receiving approval to work part time will have no right to return to work on a full time basis. Should however, a vacancy occur their request will be considered on merit.

3.4.3 Career Break

A staff member with more than three years service, a satisfactory performance assessment and work attendance record, may request a career break. Leave may be used for the following purposes:

- Domestic responsibilities including the care of young children or elderly or infirm relatives;
- Full time further education;
- A stay abroad or employment abroad;
- Starting a business;
- Maintaining a family business.

A career break will not be allowed for the purpose of taking up alternative salaried or wage earning employment in Northern Ireland. The leave is unpaid and up to a maximum of three years. Where a career break is for a period of more than 12 months the staff member must indicate in writing their intention to return to Housing Rights Service six months before the break ends and be willing to undertake any necessary training on return. Further details are contained in the Staff Handbook (Appendix B *Special Leave*).