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**Natural History Society of Northumbria**

**Equity Policy**

NHSN is committed to treating all people, inside and outside the organisation, with fairness and respect. NHSN strives to reach beyond its legal responsibilities to achieve and promote equity.

It is NHSN's aim to provide equal opportunities regardless of an individual’s race, colour, ethnic origin, gender, disability, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation or offending background. Where possible, NHSN will remove barriers to engagement in its activities. NHSN encourages feedback from all individuals.

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| **POLICY INFORMATION** |
| Policy applies to | All staff, trustees, volunteers, students, placements or anyone working on behalf of NHSN.This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation. |
| Promotion | The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved with NHSN activities  |
| Supporting documents | This policy should be used in conjunction with other NHSN policies including – Safeguarding Policy November 2021 |
| Date of adoption | 15 March 2022 at NHSN Board Meeting |
| Version number  | 1 |
| Review date  | March 2023 |

**Introduction**

NHSN recognises that individuals (which includes volunteers, members, employees, contractors. work placements, users of our heritage assets and NHSN activities) are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and not to be subjected to any form of undignified, humiliating, offensive or intimidating behaviour.

NHSN also recognises that a workplace environment that is free from intimidation encourages individuals to contribute more effectively to organisational success and to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and efficiency. Harassment and other forms of intimidating behaviour can lead to low morale, stress, anxiety and sickness. When these types of incidents occur, they can also result in damage to NHSN’s public image.

Individuals are encouraged to report any instance of harassment or intimidating behaviour to which they are subjected, in the knowledge that their complaint will be treated seriously. This should be done to their line manager or one of the Trustees.

**Legal Framework**

NHSN recognises its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and any other relevant current legislation.

**Duty of Care**

All individuals have a duty of care to ensure that the policy is implemented and understood. All individuals will be encouraged to challenge all forms of harassment and to uphold NHSN’s commitment to this Equity Policy.

**Recruitment**

NHSN aims to recruit on a fair and non-discriminatory basis. All applications will be welcome and will be considered on the relative merits of the applicant against the job and/or person specification for the position regardless of colour, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation or offending background.

Job specifications will only include criteria, which are objectively required for the duties and responsibilities of the vacancy. If there is a genuine and lawful reason for limiting a vacancy to a particular group, this will be clearly stated, and the grounds for it given on any advertisement. NHSN operates the following code of practice when recruiting: NHSN will:

* Only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that we are legally entitled to know about and where a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested.
* NHSN will only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected.
* Actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records.
* Ensure all candidates for interview are selected based on their skills, qualifications and experience.
* Only apply for a criminal record check after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will state that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted when the individual is offered the position.
* Ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment
* Make every subject of a criminal record check submitted to DBS aware of the existence of the government [code of practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice) and make a copy available on request
* Discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position, before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

**Disability Code of Practice**

NHSN values the contribution of each individual from all sectors of the community. It also recognises its social, moral and statutory duty to employ people with disabilities and will do all that is practicable to meet this responsibility. NHSN therefore operates the following code of practice:

* NHSN will take reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment, working practices and terms and conditions of employment do not prevent disabled people from taking up positions for which they are suitably qualified and, in all other respects, the best person for the job.
* NHSN will make any reasonable adjustments to the working environment, working practices and terms and conditions of employment so as to ensure that no particular disabled person is placed at an unreasonable disadvantage.
* Any employee who becomes disabled whilst in employment will be given the appropriate support of NHSN to endeavour to ensure that the employee can maintain or return to a job appropriate to their experience and abilities.