

Equality & Diversity

Information Statement

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**Foreword**

At NS&I, we are committed to becoming more diverse and supporting an inclusive culture. We know that different people who work together sharing their ideas, experience and skills, will help us make better decisions, and that if we are diverse in our thinking we are more likely to meet the needs of our diverse customers and stakeholders.

In our [‘Inspire and Invest’](http://nsandi-corporate.com/about-nsi/how-we-operate/our-inspire-and-invest-strategy/) strategy we have committed to being ‘inspiring and empowering’ and challenge ourselves to ‘do the right thing’ – taking a proactive approach to diversity and inclusion is central to meeting these strategic aims and is at the heart of our [organisational values](https://nsandi-corporate.com/about-nsi).

***“My commitment is that everyone has equal opportunities and that NS&I is a safe and engaging place to be different and work effectively”***

**Ian Ackerley, NS&I Chief Executive**

This Equality and Diversity Information Statement for NS&I as required by the Equality Act 2010 explains what NS&I is committed to doing to meet our duties and to proactively welcome diversity as an employer and as a retail and payment services provider.

It sets out our overall approach to equality and diversity both as an employer and as a provider of services and also reports on our progress against our diversity targets in 2021-22. It also covers our approach to the Public Sector Equality Duty (the ‘PSED’).

My commitment is that everyone has equal opportunities and that NS&I is a safe and engaging place to be different and work effectively, and that our customers experience our products and services in an inclusive way. Our purpose is to inspire a stronger savings culture because we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to save confidently.

Ian Ackerley

NS&I Chief Executive

July 2022

**The Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act – How these apply to NS&I**

NS&I is one of the UK's largest savings providers with 25 million customers and over £200 billion invested. We also provides business-to-business services (payment services) to other government departments. We employ around 200 people directly and work in partnership with Atos, who provide our customer services and operations. To be successful we need to:

* understand the society in which we operate,
* be clear about the impact of our policies and operations on that society,
* conduct our business with sensitivity and respect for people’s different needs and perspectives on life.

We are responsible for ensuring that Atos (and any other third parties exercising functions on its behalf) are capable of complying with the Equality Duty and that they do so in practice. We meet the [Public Service Equality Duty](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty) primarily through our leadership role. We do this by promoting policies and setting standards for partners and requiring that the impact of policy and service delivery avoids discrimination, promotes equality and best practice.

Specific duties also apply to listed authorities including NS&I and essentially provide guidance on how to better meet the general duties. A central element in this context will be the setting and publication of clear equality objectives and related data by which the public can assess our performance and hold us to account.

[The Equality Act (2010)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance) provides protection for the individual against prohibited conduct such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation and a duty to make adjustments for disabled people in certain circumstances.

Public authorities, such as NS&I, have a duty under the law to have due regard in all that we do to:

* eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
* advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,
* foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation.

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**Equality and Diversity Information Statement**

**Introduction**We are committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality in both our policies and how we deliver our services.

****The two key areas for consideration are 1) our employment practices and 2) the ways that we consider equality and diversity in our interaction with customers.

**Putting equality and diversity at the heart of our recruitment practices and our approach as an employer**

 **Leadership and Governance**Clear leadership and commitment at all levels are central to success enabling individuals and organisations to influence and shape the work we do. Our Chief Executive and Accounting Officer has overall responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality duties.

Executive directors have a strategic responsibility to ensure that equality is built into policies and procedures. They also have an important role of developing relationships with community groups and individuals and to encourage dialogue with NS&I. We have identified a ‘Lead Officer’, the Director of People and Finance, to provide leadership on this issue from an employee perspective.

We have committed to achieving gender balance on our Board and on our Executive Committee (ExCo). The balance as at 31 March 2022 on ExCo was five men and two women. On the Board, the balance was six women and six men. To achieve this objective, we have followed fair and open recruitment practices. We consider gender in our succession planning for ExCo, in our pay and appraisal outcomes and in our talent management, this progress is reported annually.

We are a member of the HM Treasury Women in Finance Charter, showing our commitment to supporting the progression of women into senior roles in the financial sector. I am proud to meet the pledges contained in the charter to:

* have one member of our senior executive team who is responsible and accountable for gender diversity and inclusion
* set internal targets for gender diversity in senior management
* publish progress annually against these targets in reports on our website
* link the pay of our senior executive team to delivery against our Women in Finance target (this is also one of our Service Delivery Measures).

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**Our performance in 2021-22**

Our **ethnic diversity target** in 2021-22 was to grow the proportion – by at least 1 percentage point - of colleagues in our senior leadership team (our CEO plus NS&I bands 1-3) who identify as coming from an ethnic minority background. This meant we needed to end the year with a figure of, at least, 12.5%. We were pleased to meet this target: ending the year at 13.56%.

Recognising the different barriers faced to career development by people from minority ethnic backgrounds, we launched a specific programme, called RISE, to mentor and support colleagues from minority ethnic backgrounds to achieve their aspirations and potential.

However, it was disappointing to again fall short on our **gender balance target** of achieving 50:50 gender balance in the same group of senior leaders (our CEO plus NS&I bands 1-3) in a range of 40%-60%. Here, we ended the year at 34.97%.

We remain committed to doing all we can to achieve both targets this year and in the years ahead. Meeting both of these targets on an ongoing basis requires us to develop talented people from all backgrounds. Alongside our new RISE programme, we also continue to participate in the Civil Service-wide Crossing Thresholds programme, which offers targeted support to women to progress their careers.

By law, all organisations with 250 employees or more are required to publish their **gender pay gap**. NS&I voluntarily publishes our data, and based on the most recent ‘snapshot’ date of 31 March 2021 NS&I’s gender pay gap data is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % |
| Mean gender pay gap – Ordinary pay | 13.6 |
| Median gender pay gap – Ordinary pay | 10.9 |
| Mean gender pay gap – Bonus paid in the 12 months ending 31 March 2021 | 21.8 |
| Median gender pay gap – Bonus paid in the 12 months ending 31 March 2021 | 12.3 |

Proportion of male and female employees paid a bonus in the 12 months ending 31 March 2021

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % |
| Male | 89.7 |
| Female | 94.1 |

Proportion of male and female employees in each quartile

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Quartile | Female % | Male % |
| Lower quartile | 53.1 | 46.9 |
| Lower middle quartile | 71.4 | 28.6 |
| Upper middle quartile | 40.8 | 59.2 |
| Upper quartile | 38.8 | 61.2 |

NS&I is committed to fairness and transparency in our pay and it is important for us to understand the gaps and to reduce the gaps in future years; therefore we will continue to analyse the gaps and establish plans to reduce the gaps.

**Our targets for 2022-23**

1) **Ethnic diversity target** - to achieve 13% of colleagues in our senior leadership team (our CEO plus NS&I bands 1-3) who identify as coming from an ethnic minority background

2) **Gender balance target** - to achieve 50:50 gender balance in the same group of senior leaders (our CEO plus NS&I bands 1-3) in a range of 40%-60%.

**Recruitment Practice**

Alongside our public targets, we recognise that encouraging diversity in recruitment and valuing the diversity we have among our own employees is key to our success and effectiveness. We are committed to being a fair and inclusive organisation, respecting what each person brings to our business and recognising the value they add.

No employee or potential employee will therefore receive less favourable treatment due to their race, creed, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, age, language, religion, political or other opinion affiliation, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status, connections with a national minority, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, family connections, working pattern, membership or non-membership of a trade union or, unless justifiable, disability.

At NS&I we are committed to best practice in recruitment and our processes are underpinned by the principle of appointment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as outlined in [Civil Service Recruitment Principles.](http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/civil-service-recruitment/)

NS&I is a certified Disability Confident Committed employer. This means that as an employer we are committed to:

* ensuring our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
* communicating and promoting vacancies
* offering an interview to disabled people
* anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required
* supporting any existing employee who acquires a disability or long term health condition, enabling them to stay in work
* at least one activity that will make a difference for disabled people.

The Civil Service Commissioners chair selection panels for all Executive Director level recruitment at NS&I. The Civil Service Commission is committed to the principle of appointment on merit and promotes and supports efforts to get the best candidates drawn ****from a strong and diverse field. ****

For other staff recruitment, at the sifting stage, we anonymise applications (removing candidates’ personal details) and recruiting managers make decisions based on a candidate’s experience and nothing else, ensuring that no unconscious bias takes place.  Vacancies are advertised in a range of places and – where we can - we also work with specialist recruitment agencies to attract the most diverse pool of candidates as possible.

For all roles, we have increased our direct recruitment via our own website and LinkedIn, and improved the online information available to candidates so that they know more about our approach to diversity and our values. Anecdotal evidence shows this is a key factor for candidates. ****

**A culture of ‘welcoming diversity’**

Our [organisational values](https://nsandi-corporate.com/about-nsi) include a commitment to being ‘*Inspiring, Secure, Straightforward, and Reassuringly Human’* with our colleagues and our customers. We recognise that our efforts to encourage diversity and be more inclusive are critical to living these values.

In the same way, diversity helps to drive the way we live our values internally; for example we know that a diverse workforce will *inspire* ongoing diversity, and that by embracing difference we will be *reassuringly human*, to our customers, prospective employees and as an employer.

***“In the 2021 Civil Service People Survey, 91% of NS&I employees took part: 76% agreed NS&I is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace and 75% think that NS&I respects individual differences.”***

We have worked particularly hard during periods of enforced home working due to the pandemic to ensure that we support colleagues’ physical and emotional wellbeing. We have a group of trained mental health first aiders support our colleagues.

Our people have access to a wide range of tools and materials to support their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing including Workplace Wellness, our Employee Assistance Programme as well as the Civil Service Wellbeing Gateway. We use Wellness Action Plans based on the [Mind](https://www.mind.org.uk/) approach so that employees and their manager have an agreed written plan about how to support mental health at work.

Once again, we took part in the [Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index](https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/workplace-wellbeing-index/). This is a benchmark of best policy and practice, designed to recognise good work being done by employers to promote positive mental health and to provide organisations with key recommendations on the areas where there is room to improve. For NS&I, this gives us a richer picture of our progress on supporting mental wellbeing and benchmarks NS&I against other organisations. This year, we again achieved the Mind silver award.

We have adopted the ‘Happy to talk Flexible working’ logo promoted by the charity Working Families. Some staff work part time and a majority have chosen to work compressed hours, through a 9 day fortnight.

We also have ‘employee supporters’. Their role is to support an employee through the process of making a complaint about bullying and harassment under our Dignity at Work policy or to offer support to an employee who has had a complaint made against them.

 Finally, we have our Diversity Allies group - a cross section of employees from across our business who help shape our approach to delivering a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

The Diversity Allies have been instrumental in raising the profile of diversity and inclusion at NS&I.

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We are committed to treating our customers fairly and with the dignity and respect to which they are entitled. To ensure we do this we have invested in both leadership and insight and we have identified a ‘Member Champion’, the Retail Director, to provide leadership on this issue from a customer perspective as well as undertaking customer surveys across a broad spectrum of customer types including a range of socio-economic and age groups.

***“NS&I is committed to ensuring that information and services are fully accessible to all parts of the community.”***

**Putting equality and diversity at the heart of our customer operations**

This commitment is reflected in our **Vulnerable Customers Policy** and our **Customer Experience Principles and Standards**. These guide the business to ensure we duly consider fair customer treatment and customer vulnerability when we define and deliver our products and services and in all aspects of our work.

We aim to deliver a balanced portfolio of products that are accessible across a range of channels to suit varied customer preferences and needs.

To support our commitment and focus on accessibility in 2021 we carried out a review of our digital accessibility maturity. This review (in partnership with pioneering accessibility charity AbiltyNet) has empowered us to further embed accessibility into our vision, leadership and design processes.

Greater accessibility is achieved through using inclusive design processes and will enable us to further develop our products and services to not only benefit customers with characteristics of vulnerability but all customers in all circumstances.

To further help support and drive an accessibility focused culture and working environment within NS&I we have established an **Accessibility Champions Network**. The Champions focus is on digital accessibility and inclusion – specifically working with colleagues and external partners to remove barriers for customers and colleagues using digital products and services.

**Our public access arrangements**
Our customers have diverse needs which can limit their access to information, for example customers with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats. Through providing suitable alternatives to printed information we are committed to ensuring that information and services are fully accessible to all parts of the community. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case. We’re committed to making sure our website is accessible to as many of our customers as possible. We aim to conform to the ‘Double A’ level of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 and we develop and test accordingly.

**Partnership working**NS&I meets the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) primarily through setting policies and standards for its service delivery partners and ensuring that the impact of policy and service delivery avoids discrimination, promotes equality and best practice.

NS&I will work with its partners to promote equality by:

* sharing existing information and good practice
* gathering new information
* developing joint consultation and involvement methods and structures where appropriate
* developing joint working and co-delivery of services where practicable
* pooling budgets and resources where practicable
* promoting the living wage to our suppliers and seeking a living wage commitment when major contracts are procured.

NS&I is an accredited living wage employer. This commits to ensure all staff are paid at or above the Foundation’s living wage rates

NS&I is a founder member of the Retail Financial Services Forum, which brings together public sector organisations operating in the retail financial services sector. The Forum has agreed a set of vulnerability principles we will all follow in our service design and delivery.

**Conclusion**We hope the steps we are taking within NS&I, demonstrated within this statement, show how committed we are to improving Equality and Diversity within our organisation. We also hope it demonstrates how we:

* comply with the Equality Act and the PSED across our functions
* ensure that our policies and practices further the aims of the PSED
* ensure that equality implications are fully considered when making decisions and formulating policies and practices

We track progress in a number of ways: Customer Satisfaction rates; Customer Effort scores; annual employee surveys; the annual Mind survey; employee diversity data and performance against our targets; recruitment audit results; partnership surveys; and complaints tracking.

**We welcome your comments or suggestions on how we might improve this document. Please contact us at**

**Email:** customerservices@nsandi.com.

**Telephone:** 08085 007 007 – our customer service team is available from 7am to 10pm, seven days a week. Calls may be recorded.

**Textphone:** to use the Text Relay Service just dial 18001 from your textphone and enter the telephone number you want to call. When the call is answered, a Text Relay operator will join in the call and communicate your written request to us.

**Post:** write to us at NS&I, Sunderland SR43 2SB

**Twitter:** @nsandihelp