



Disability Policy

1. General

The Marine Institute is fully committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and treatment of its entire staff through its employment practices. The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear statement in relation to people with disabilities and provide guidance in relation to recruitment, employment, training, development and promotion as well as to visitors to our facilities. **(This policy should be read in conjunction with the MI Access and Equality Policy).**

2. Policy Statement

The Institute's policy is to develop and sustain positive measures to encourage the recruitment, development and retention of people with disabilities and to make every effort to ensure the continued employment of any employee who becomes disabled while working for the Institute.

3. Definition

There is a statutory definition of disability in the Employment Equality Act, 1998. In summary, in the context of employment, the term "people with disabilities" means people with physical, sensory, or psychological impairments which may:

- have a tangible impact on their functional ability to do a certain job;
- have an impact on their ability to function in a particular environment.

4. Recruitment/Selection

The Institute welcomes and encourages applications for positions in the Institute from people with disabilities. The Institute will work with the National Disability Authority and where appropriate, other voluntary organisations specifically involved with the training and placement of people with disabilities.

The Institute is committed to Government policy on the employment of people with disabilities in the Public Service to a minimum of 3% of total staff. The Institute will play its full part in ensuring that this objective is achieved and maintained.

5. Medicals

People with disabilities will not be excluded from employment on the assumption that health screening will automatically lead to their rejection. The selection

process and pre-employment medical checks will be kept separate and pre-employment medicals conducted only when a candidate has been assessed on objective criteria.

However, national and international standards, which the Institute is statutorily bound to apply, require that persons carrying out certain duties meet specified medical criteria. Subject to the continued observation of these standards, the Institute will ensure that it does not require job applicants to meet medical standards more stringent than are necessary for performance of the job.

6. Induction/Integration/Facilities

The Institute recognises that people with disabilities may encounter additional difficulties in adjusting to a new workplace. Particular attention will be given to placing staff with disabilities, monitoring their performance in the initial stages of employment and altering the working environment where feasible.

7. Career Development

Employees with disabilities will be given the same opportunities as all other employees to acquire the range of skills and experience necessary for future career development and enhancement. They will be offered the same access to training and development opportunities as other employees. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure they are not inhibited from availing of such opportunities for reasons of physical or sensory access to training centres, conference rooms, format of training materials etc. Training plans will be "disability proofed" to ensure equality of opportunity for employees with disabilities. Staff with disabilities will be encouraged through positive action initiatives to apply for promotion. Staff with disabilities will not be excluded from promotion solely because their disability may prevent them from carrying out the full range of duties in the higher grade.

8. Retention of employees who become disabled

Losing the services of an employee who becomes disabled deprives an organisation of a considerable asset and investment in terms of their skills, experience, training and the loyalty and commitment they have shown.

Any employee who becomes disabled will be given the fullest support to maintain or return to a role appropriate to their experience and abilities.

9. Work Experience/Job Placements

Work experience not only benefits the person with a disability in terms of developing confidence and skills in getting a job, but it also raises awareness of disability issues amongst staff and managers.

Where feasible, the Institute will offer such work experience/job placements to people with disabilities involved in external training or education programmes.

10. Feedback/Complaints

Providing comments, complaints or suggestions regarding this Disability Policy may be addressed to:

Inquiry Officer
Marine Institute
Rinville
Oranmore
Co. Galway
Tel: 091 387200
Fax: 091 387201
Email: inquiryofficer@marine.ie

11. Complaints in relation to recruitment of people with disabilities will be addressed in the first instance to the Manager of Human Resources. In accordance with the Employment Equality Act, 1998, complainants may also have recourse to the Director of Equality Investigations, Office of the Director of Equality Investigations, Clonmel Place (off Harcourt Street), Dublin 2 (Telephone 01-4173300, email info@odei.ie).

12. Enquiries

All enquiries and questions on disability should be addressed to the Access Officer (aofficer@marine.ie).

13. Disability Liaison

A designated Access Officer will be available who will provide a confidential support role for employees with a disability.

14. Review and Monitoring

All aspects of this Disability Policy will be monitored and will be reviewed annually by the Institute's Equality Steering Committee. Comments from all employees are welcome.

15. Education and Training

Training for appropriate personnel (e.g. managers, supervisors, Human Resources staff, Access Officer, Contact Persons, Fire Wardens, Safety Officers/Representatives) will be provided. In addition, general information sessions and induction will be arranged for all employees on disability awareness and the contents of this Policy will be summarised in a leaflet for distribution to all employees.

Appendix 1

RECRUITMENT/SELECTION PROCEDURES

External Agencies:

Any external agency retained to assist in any recruitment selection process will be made aware of the Company's Disability Policy.

Advertising:

Recruitment advertising will make it clear that the Institute welcomes applications from people with disabilities and is flexible in accepting alternative methods of making a job application e.g. by telephone, email or audio tape.

Advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications and any form of selection will be monitored to ensure that they do not disadvantage people with disabilities.

Selection Process (including interviews/tests):

Candidates who are called for tests or interviews will be asked whether they have any particular needs for which the Institute can make prior provision. The Institute will endeavour to ensure that, where possible any special arrangements which may be needed are made available e.g. ensuring that the place of interview is accessible; make provision for an interpreter for someone with a hearing impairment or speech difficulty.

Human Resources and other Institute personnel involved in the selection process will be trained on disability awareness and the application of the Institute's Equality and Disability Policies to this area. Selection interviews will be conducted in a manner that emphasises abilities, achievements and individual qualities. Questions concerning an interviewee's disability will be restricted to areas relevant to the work situation. Interviewers shall not make assumptions about an individual's ability to perform certain tasks - people with disabilities often develop innovative solutions to everyday challenges, with or without technical aid or personal support.

Appendix 2**INDUCTION/INTEGRATION/FACILITIES****Special Needs Assessments:**

Managers/supervisors of employees' with disabilities may be informed of the employee's circumstances if relevant to the working situation. Consideration will be given to any special needs arising from an employee's disability and such needs will be discussed between the employee concerned and the appropriate manager/supervisor prior to the commencement of the induction programme. An example of such a need might be the provision of a private place to take necessary medication.

Every effort will be made to match the abilities of an employee with a disability to the requirements of a job and where feasible, special equipment will be provided e.g. adjustments to office furniture, such as specially designed desks or chairs, or alterations to computer equipment or software.

Managers/supervisors will, as part of the Performance Management System, consult employees with disabilities about special equipment or other accommodation which might enable them to carry out their duties more efficiently and effectively.

Institute Buildings/Premises:

The Institute, when undertaking any significant structural alteration or renovation of existing buildings, will in so far as is reasonably practicable, include in the works such alterations as are necessary to bring the building up to an acceptable standard of accessibility for people with disabilities.

Car Parking:

Car parking spaces will be reserved for disabled drivers, where possible, close to Institute buildings. Full accessibility of premises will, in so far as is reasonably practicable, be provided for both employees and customers with disabilities e.g. provision of ramps, lifts and hand rails, doors with minimum clear opening, minimum door widths and cubicle sizes for toilets etc.

Disability Awareness Training:

People with disabilities are often confronted in the workplace with pre-conceived ideas or myths about their disability, such as their ability to do the work, and what they might need to do the job. Many people have had little opportunity to interact with people with disabilities and thus are uninformed about the reality of living/working with a disability. Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities may be caused simply by a lack of knowledge or information. Disability awareness training may be provided for staff in areas where an employee with a disability is being assigned in consultation with the individual employee.

Health and Safety:

The health and safety provisions which the Institute makes for all employees apply equally to employees with disabilities (see MI Safety Statement). All places of work will be designed and maintained in a condition that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risk to health, with safe means of access and egress. For employees with disabilities, the Institute will arrange appropriate consultation in order to establish specific needs and have in place a clearly articulated well practised plan to evacuate people with disabilities from buildings in case of emergency.

Employees with disabilities, who need assistance in the event of an evacuation, must make this known to the Fire Warden responsible for their area.

The Fire Warden will consult with employees in the area to determine what special measures are required. Where the employee moves to a different area, he/she must inform the appropriate Fire Warden of his/her individual requirements.

Communications:

All company literature e.g. Institute handbooks, policy statements, newsletters etc. will be provided, for employees who have such a requirement, in large print, Braille, audio tape or computer disk.

Good communications are a paramount requirement in overcoming difficulties which may arise for employees with disabilities. The best source of information about disability and any needs which an employee with a disability may have, or facilities which may be required for optimised performance can be identified by the person with the disability. Accordingly, full and frank discussions and open communication on any such needs is essential if difficulties are to be minimised.