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special issue

The Nationwide Group Staff Union

## Security of Employment and Redundancy Agreement (SERA): Pension Enhancements

In October 2006 changes had to be made to the way redundancy payments are calculated following the introduction of the Age Discrimination Regulations. This was because the method of calculating redundancy payments was linked to the age of an employee in a way that did not comply with the statutory redundancy calculation.

Although the redundancy calculation changed in October we agreed with Nationwide to delay any change to the way pension enhancements are calculated under SERA. Pension enhancements provide an additional payment to an employee's pension upon redundancy provided they meet the eligibility criteria - critically having had 10 years' service in the pension fund and aged over 40. We sought the delay because we wanted to fully understand the implications of the Age regulations in relation to Pension Provisions. This part of the regulations did not come into force until 1 December 2006.

I am pleased to advise members that having worked with Nationwide for the past six months or so we are now able to confirm that Pension Enhancements within SERA will be retained for existing pension fund members and for anyone joining the pension fund up until 31 March 2007. It has, however, been necessary to amend the way in which the enhancements are calculated - with total length of service with Nationwide being a new determinant rather than length of membership in the Pension Fund and age. This means there will be no loss of benefit and for those whose length of service exceeds their membership of the fund there will be a modest benefit in the event of redundancy.

Pension enhancements are an unusual feature of modern redundancy agreements and therefore I am delighted that we have been able to secure this benefit for existing fund members.

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### Disciplinary Officers - Volunteers Needed

We are currently looking for volunteers to train as union Disciplinary Officers (DOs). We need DOs in all parts of the country but we are particularly keen to find volunteers who work in the north.

Disciplinary Officers (DOs) are Union members who have been trained and accredited to represent other members at formal disciplinary or capability hearings. A DO helps to support a member before, during and after a hearing. They will ensure that the hearing is conducted fairly and in accordance with agreed procedures. With their knowledge of previous cases, DOs can also ensure that any decision reached at a hearing is

consistent with decisions given in the past.

All new DOs attend a union training course and follow a program of development leading to accreditation as a certified Disciplinary Officer. Nationwide recognises the important role that our DOs play in the disciplinary process and provide paid time-off to attend training and to fulfil DO duties. We will ask you to attend a number of hearings every year (a minimum of 3) to help you maintain your skills, however we're also mindful of your work commitments and you will agree your availability with us to make sure you case load is manageable.

If you'd like to find out more about this important role please ring Marian Dean on 01295 710767.

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### Individual Representation during Probation

We have received a number of queries over recent months about whether union members who are in their probationary period are entitled to union representation at formal hearings - in particular at extension of probation hearings.

The answer is YES - provided that you've joined the union and have paid one month's subscription. Individual Representation means that a trained union officer will support you before, during and after a formal hearing. It is important to have representation - even if you are told that extending your probation is a formality. The Union can help you make sure that you are being treated fairly and are receiving all the support and training you need to succeed in your career at Nationwide.

All employees joining the union get immediate access to advice and other union services. Members are eligible for individual representation after one month's subscription has been paid if joining during probation and after three month's subscription has been paid if joining once employment has been confirmed.

All employees have the legal right to be accompanied at formal hearings either by an accredited Disciplinary Officer (if an eligible NGSU member) or by a companion e.g. a work colleague - so don't be afraid to ask for this support.

**Tim Poil**  
General Secretary