



## **Candidate Information Booklet**

**IRC287813**

**Health & Safety Advisor: Higher Scientific Officer (HSO)**

**Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland  
(AFBI)**

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**Agri-Food and Biosciences  
Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

**Communication between HRConnect and you**

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

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## **ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE**

As the Northern Ireland Government's main research and science provider in the areas of agri-food, fisheries and the environment, AFBI's science plays a crucial role in providing the underpinning statutory and analytical testing, research and development work, emergency response and expert scientific advice required to support the work of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the wider agri-food industry.

In line with AFBI's vision of "Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence" the Institute seeks to be an influential, internationally recognised, centre for research and scientific services in the agri-food and marine sectors. AFBI's science is outcome-driven and aimed at solving important practical problems for a wide range of local, national and international funders in the public and private sectors. Our staff carry out world class research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for a wide range of customers in the fields of animal health and welfare, sustainable agricultural systems, plant science, food innovation and safety, environmental protection, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and agricultural and rural economics.

AFBI's current Corporate Plan outlines our strategy and ambitions for the period 2018 to 2022. It sets out the 3 strategic outcomes we aim to deliver for society, the economy and the environment, as well as industry and customers in an ever more efficient and effective manner. The plan, demonstrates the unique multidisciplinary strength of AFBI and how we will work with partners from science, government, industry and farmers to provide a positive impact. These achievements will be underpinned by attracting and developing excellent staff and building fit for purpose physical infrastructure.

AFBI's 'Science Impacts 2021' publication outlines key outcomes from AFBI science. Notably over the past 5 years AFBI have delivered approximately four million animal, plant and food safety tests to support sales from the NI agri-food industry to the value of £3.2 billion. Over the past 5 years, AFBI have delivered over 90 evidence and innovation projects for DAERA, approximately 400 peer review scientific publications and have secured £44m of external research grants and contracts working with partners from across 35 countries.

In order to fulfil these outcomes for our funders and stakeholders across society, the economy and the environment, AFBI enjoys access to highly instrumented laboratory, field and ship based scientific platforms. Furthermore, we are working closely with our sponsor department to take forward an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure including a new Animal Health Sciences Building at AFBI Stormont, enhanced research farm facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a replacement sea-going research vessel.

## AFBI SITES

AFBI is located on seven sites across Northern Ireland with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

In addition AFBI has a dedicated marine research vessel, the RV Corystes, based in Port of Belfast.



- Bushmills
- Crossnacreevy
- Hillsborough
- Loughgall (Manor Estate; Churchfield; Deerpark Farm)
- Newforge Lane, Belfast (Headquarters)
- Omagh
- Stormont (Stoney Road), Belfast

AFBI has a current staff complement of approximately 700 people, with an annual turnover of approximately £60 million. We are currently organised across four Divisions – Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD), Veterinary Science Division (VSD), and Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD).

## DIVISIONAL BACKGROUND

### FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION (FCAD)

The position of Health and Safety Manager is based in the FCAD division within the Health and Safety and Compliance Branch. The FCAD division is primarily based at AFBI headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast but with staff deployed at some of the larger sites.

FCAD includes the following Branches:

**Corporate Communications Branch** – is responsible for all of AFBI's internal and external communications. It support scientists to ensure their message is impactful by running a press office (including social media and photography), events management, and print and digital publishing to the AFBI intranet and internet.

**Estate Management & Development Branch** – has responsibility for delivering estate and property management services across the AFBI estate and business continuity management.

**Health and Safety and Compliance Branch** – is responsible for setting the corporate framework for health and safety. Key within this remit is the provision of advice and support to all functions across the organisation in the implementation of the arrangements within the AFBI Corporate Health and Safety Policies as well as Waste Management and Biosafety.

**Finance & Procurement Branch** – is responsible for the delivery of all finance related functions in support of AFBI's Divisions and Executive Management Team. This includes financial planning, budgeting and accounting and business planning and financial systems. The Branch provides a stores service on the Newforge and Stormont sites and also provides procurement advice.

**Governance & Performance Branch** – provides support and advice on a range of corporate and information governance matters including organisational performance management, risk management, business planning, audit and assurance, insurance & indemnities, data protection, freedom of information, environmental information regulations and records management.

**Human Resources Branch** – delivers a range of services to support the Institute in the functions of learning & development, equality, performance management, workforce planning and employee relations. The team are extremely focused on providing support to staff and line managers in ensuring they have what they need to meet wider business plan objectives.

**Information Systems Branch** – provides comprehensive line-of-business IT infrastructure and application support. This service is offered in conjunction with the support for common IT services provided by IT Assist, Department of Finance (DoF) and Enterprise Shared Services (ESS). The Branch also develops bespoke software solutions for internal and external clients to the benefit of the agri-food industry. Through development of these systems, ISB forms quality

partnerships which leads to further collaboration between AFBI and industry bodies. ISB's operations are guided by AFBI's IT Strategic Plan which seeks to ensure that IT continues to work as a strategic enabler for the Institute.

**Research Support Office** – enhances AFBI's success in maximising the benefit from relevant external funding and commercialisation opportunities, including the provision of support and guidance to AFBI staff during the development stage of funding applications. The unit facilitates horizon scanning, seeking to ensure that management and scientific colleagues are kept informed of emerging opportunities. In addition, it supports colleagues through the administrative process involved in winning and then managing grant funded projects.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION (EMSD)**

EMSD is comprised of two Branches:

**Agri-Environment Branch** – interfaces with intensive livestock production and environmental management and regulation which includes the impacts of agricultural land use practices on soil, water and air.

**Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch** – conducts research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in marine fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone science, oceanography & limnology, marine and freshwater ecosystem health, and freshwater fisheries stock assessment.

This Division's remit reflects the increasing importance and amount of scientific work undertaken by AFBI in the agri-environment, marine and aquatic ecosystems areas. The Division focuses on evidence based science, which is key to addressing the significant environmental challenges whilst ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and the future prosperity of the agri-food sector. The Division is in a unique position to deliver an integrated high impact programme of research spanning from the "soil to the sea".

## **SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)**

SAFSD currently employs scientific, technical and support staff across its five Branches.

**Economics Research Branch** – undertakes quantitative and qualitative socioeconomic research to inform agri-food and rural policy development and industry decision making, regionally and nationally.

**Livestock Production Sciences Branch** – links fundamental livestock science to systems level research to deliver innovations for the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge.

**Food Research Branch** – delivers research in the areas of optimising eating quality and nutritional quality in meat, dairy and other food products, together with evaluating novel processes for extending shelf-life and increasing safety.

**Grassland and Plant Science Branch** – underpins DAERA's policy development on plant health and deliver scientific advances in areas such as grass breeding, testing and agronomy, plant health and land management.

**Statistical Services Branch** – provides Statistical Analyses and Consultation Services in support of Scientific Research Projects and Statutory work carried out by AFBI.

The Division is a highly multidisciplinary team with a focus on livestock, plant and in general agriculture production and their interactions with the environment and the economy.

SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock and land management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation and monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally.

## **VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)**

VSD currently employs veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its four branches. The Division is predominantly based at Stoney Road, Belfast with a smaller disease surveillance centre based at Omagh.

VSD includes the following Branches:

**Bacteriology Branch** – undertakes statutory, analytical and research work on the major bacterial pathogens of animal and public health significance. Much of this work underpins important DAERA animal disease control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis and food-borne zoonoses.

**Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences Branch** – includes chemical analysis for a wide range of veterinary drug residues, marine biotoxins, pesticides, mycotoxins and heavy metals as well as immunodiagnostic testing in support of a number of disease control programmes including brucellosis, transboundary diseases, import/export testing and TSE.

**Disease Surveillance and Investigation Branch** – undertakes a programme of scanning (passive) disease surveillance on behalf of DAERA and provides commercial laboratory services in support of industry led disease eradication and control programmes.

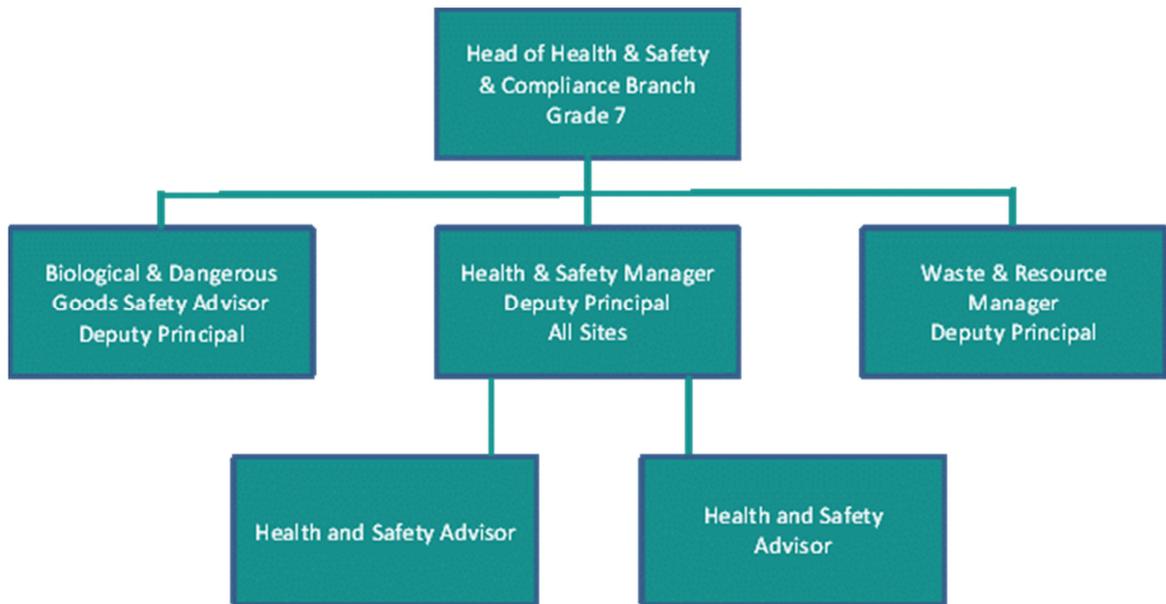
**Virology Branch** – aims to improve the diagnosis and control of viral diseases of farmed animals (pigs, poultry, cattle, sheep and aquaculture). The Branch also has responsibility for the molecular confirmation of major infectious / epizootic diseases in animals.

## BRANCH BACKGROUND

### AFBI Health and Safety and Compliance Branch

The successful candidate will be a member of the Health and Safety and Compliance Branch. The Branch has responsibility for supporting and ensuring health and safety, biosafety including biocontainment and biotransport, and dangerous goods compliance across the Institute. In the near future it will also incorporate waste management compliance.

The Branch structure is in a phase of further development with the envisioned structure (as of time of this document being issued) shown below:



The Branch has responsibility for ensuring the overall effectiveness of AFBI's health and safety and associated compliance systems including the:

- development and updating of associated systems and policies
- provision of expert advice and support to Divisions and Branches
- implementing effective systems of oversight and audit

The scientific areas across AFBI are diverse, comprising laboratory, field and farm environments, as well as a research vessel. The science disciplines undertaken across the organisation include chemistry, microbiology, animal studies as well as field activities on both land and sea.

Current functions include laboratories operating to Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) Hazard Group 3 and Specific Animal Pathogens (SAPO) Containment Level 3 (CL3) microbiological requirements. In accordance with changing work priorities and areas of research for the Institute,

although not currently undertaken, future work involving SAPO 4/Hazard Group 4 agents may be introduced.

The main functions of the Health and Safety Unit within the AFBI Health and Safety and Compliance Branch are:

- Ensuring there are suitable and sufficient systems and policies in place for managing legal compliance effectively.
- Providing advice and support to all business units and managers to help them ensure that policies and procedures are being followed.
- Ensuring an effective system of H&S and compliance training including assisting work areas in the identification of training needs; undertaking or securing the provision of relevant training events; and in conjunction with AFBI HR and AFBI Quality Assurance Unit ensuring an effective system of formal and workplace training recording.
- Ensuring that work environments meet statutory and best practice requirements.
- Ensuring that an effective methodology is in place and implemented for the assessment of health and safety risks.
- Maintaining a system for recording, reporting and investigating injuries, accidents and dangerous occurrences in Institute premises.
- Ensuring that health and safety inspection and monitoring systems and processes are in place and that they are operating effectively.
- Ensuring health and safety information is communicated clearly to appropriate audiences.
- Reporting relevant information and key performance indicators (KPIs) on health and safety performance to relevant personnel to ensure suitable arrangements are put in place to reduce risk as far as reasonably practicable.
- Liaising with Health and Safety Executive (Northern Ireland and Great Britain), DAERA and other bodies concerned with health and safety in relation to matters of health and safety in AFBI.
- Liaising with AFBI Human Resources (HR) and the NICS Occupational Health Service (OHS) with regard to medical/ health surveillance and referrals requiring reasonable adjustments.

A number of the functions listed above will be carried out in collaboration with the Biosafety and Dangerous Goods Unit, which takes lead responsibility where biological pathogens and/or dangerous goods (ADR/RID/IMDG/IATA) are the subject matter.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

There is currently **one** full-time permanent position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any similar vacancies which may arise.

### **Salary**

The salary for the post will be within the range £32,328 – £33,459 within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale except for existing AFBI staff for whom starting salary may be determined by either promotion or re-grading terms if these are more favourable.

In exceptional circumstances only, consideration may be given to starting at a higher point on the salary scale for applicants with additional relevant experience and/or qualifications. The relevance and extent of the additional experience will be determined by AFBI at the time of offer of appointment.

### **Location**

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Stormont, 12 Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SD, however, they will be expected to work at other AFBI sites in Northern Ireland as required including AFBI Hillsborough and the AFBI Research Vessel (RV) Corystes when in dock.

### **Travel**

The post will entail travel on public roads using AFBI vehicles and for this reason the successful applicant must hold a full current driving licence to enable them to drive in Northern Ireland and meet the requirement of the post in full. The post may also entail some (occasional) travel outside Northern Ireland.

### **Medical**

Although not generally physically strenuous, a requisite degree of fitness is required to fulfil the post. The successful candidate will be asked to complete a health declaration questionnaire and may be invited to attend a medical examination to confirm that they are fit to carry out the physical duties of the post. This will include accessing Containment Level 2 – 3 labs up to and including CL3.

The successful candidate will be required to access containment level laboratories handling pathogenic Hazard Group agents (under controlled conditions). This will not generally necessitate vaccination, however, where deemed necessary, due to the nature of biological agents handled, and in line with best practice guidance, vaccination will be offered to the employee prior to work within these areas.

## **Training**

Due to the nature of the role, it is a requirement of the post that the successful candidate shall achieve the following recognised training/memberships (unless already held) as soon as reasonably practicable within the probationary period. AFBI shall fund all necessary training/memberships (and any subsequent refreshers/membership renewals) listed below:

- CIEHF accredited Advanced Display Screen Assessor qualification.
- 'Fit2Fit' accredited qualitative face fit testing qualification.
- Manual Handling instructor qualification.
- IOSH Graduate/Technical membership\*

\* Level of IOSH membership dependant on level of recognised professional occupational health and safety qualification upon commencement of employment.

In due course it is expected that the successful candidate will also undertake the following course:

- Institute of Safety in Technology and Research Biosafety Practitioner Level 1 (or equivalent).

## **Annual Leave**

In addition to the 12 standard public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 after five years' satisfactory service.

## **Working Hours**

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours. On occasions the duties may include some evening and weekend working. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

## **Probation**

The post holder will serve 12 months' probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a formal review will be conducted to determine if the posting will be made permanent.

## **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may telephone Workforce Planning on 028 9025 5588 or email AFBI HR at: [workforceplanning@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:workforceplanning@afbini.gov.uk).

If you have any questions about the competition process, you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net).

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

The AFBI Health & Safety Advisor will be responsible for contributing to a positive health and safety culture and to assist colleagues to work more safely across all business areas within the four AFBI Divisions. The role will entail providing expert advice and support to the AFBI Head of Health & Safety & Compliance Branch and Health & Safety Manager, and in turn, all levels of employees in relation to the impact of Health and Safety requirements and risk to AFBI. The focus of the role will be at AFBI Stormont in relation veterinary sciences and AFBI Hillsborough the primary site for the AFBI farmed estate.

The post-holder will be responsible, with guidance from the AFBI Head of Health & Safety & Compliance Branch and Health & Safety Manager, for contributing to the development and implementation of a health and safety management system (incorporating Policies, procedures, guidance and controls), with the aim of continuous improvement of health and safety performance and legal compliance within the Institute.

The Health & Safety Advisor will report to the AFBI Head of Health & Safety Manager and work in conjunction with other members of the Health and Safety Unit, management and staff across the Institute, and also specialist external technical advisors (for instance dangerous goods and biological safety) in discharging the Unit's duties.

The main duties of the post-holder will include:

### **Implementation of arrangements of the AFBI Health and Safety Management System (HSMS)**

Implementation of the HSMS including through the following:

- Input to development of Policy, procedure and guidance documentation across a range of topics.
- Providing advice and guidance to colleagues across the Institute and monitoring compliance with same.

### **Compliance with Statutory and Regulatory Obligations**

Advise and assist the AFBI Head of Health & Safety & Compliance Branch and Health & Safety Manager, AFBI senior management and staff to ensure a safe working environment, in accordance with health and safety legislation, including through the following:

- Act as a competent health and safety professional providing advice and support commensurate with this role to assist the Institute in discharging its responsibilities in respect of health and safety compliance.
- Conduct regular site inspections in line with branch schedule including reporting findings and providing advice and recommendations to line managers and those with responsibility for site and equipment across AFBI.
- Draft and develop health and safety policies, procedures and guidance.

- Ensure arrangements for the effective implementation of health and safety policy and procedures and work with managers and staff to develop local work procedures to ensure compliance with legal obligations.
- Liaise with the relevant health and safety and employers' organisations and advise the Institute on changes in statutory requirements and best practice.
- Regularly evaluate compliance with relevant legislation.

### **Training Advice and Provision**

A key aspect of this role shall be (in association with the AFBI Learning and Development Unit and AFBI Health & Safety Manager), taking a leading role in the organisation-wide improvement of health and safety competency, including through the following:

- Assist management to identify health and safety training needs of staff and liaise with managers to nominate staff for training courses.
- Specification of relevant training programmes and clarification of statutory/best practice training content, accreditation requirements, etc.
- Develop and deliver in-house training (including risk assessment, manual handling, respirator face fit, and farm safety) programmes and events including contribution to the staff induction programme regarding health and safety.
- To undertake relevant training as determined by the AFBI Head of Health & Safety & Compliance Branch and Health & Safety Manager to ensure that the post-holder's competence is maintained in order to deliver the requirements of the post, and in line with the principles of IOSH continuing professional development (CPD). This shall include those courses prescribed within the 'training' section of this specification, and any subsequent training priorities agreed with line management.

### **Risk Assessment and Management**

Ensuring that an effective system is maintained for the assessment of health and safety risks, through the following:

- Advise staff with the completion of risk assessments, by providing advice and guidance, and ensure that risk assessments (general and specific, such as COSHH, new and expectant mothers, first aid, manual handling, DSE, etc.) are completed for all activities with significant risks.
- Maintain a database of risk assessments and provide up to date, relevant information and reports on risk assessments and the status of any actions/further control measures arising.
- Manage and mitigate risks by putting in place effective risk control systems within the post holder's defined areas of responsibility.

## **Incident Investigation and Prevention**

Management of the AFBI system for recording, reporting and investigating injuries, accidents and dangerous occurrences across the Institute, including through the following:

- Receive and analyse reports of accidents, dangerous occurrences, fire damage, or other serious incidents, carrying out investigations when appropriate, determining their causes, and make recommendations to address issues, reduce risk of recurrence and additional controls needed.
- Monitor and ensure all incidents are properly investigated by Line Managers, and lessons learned are shared across work areas.
- Provide professional advice to management (and recognised Trade Union Health and Safety Representatives, as necessary) where necessary as they carry out investigations.
- Liaise with management to ensure completion of significant actions pertaining to investigations.
- Provision of regular update reports to AFBI Head of Health & Safety & Compliance Branch and Health & Safety Manager.
- Involvement in improvement programmes pertaining to investigations/incident trends.

## **Work Environment and Equipment Safety**

Ensure work environments meet statutory and best practice requirements, including through the following:

- Ensure staff moves and relocations are risk assessed and planned.
- Monitoring of work areas such as laboratories, farm buildings, and animal handling facilities.
- Monitor that equipment (such as laboratory instrumentation and farm plant and implements) purchased is appropriate, properly risk assessed, maintained, and meets safety standards.
- Conducting (with appropriate competency training) occupational/industrial hygiene assessments such as noise, dust, hazardous airborne substances and electromagnetic field assessments.
- Ensure that arrangements for contractors coming on site to carry out works are adequate, effective and fully compliant with relevant regulatory requirements. Ensure contractors are involved at the planning stage of any refurbishment or project work.
- In conjunction with AFBI Estate Premises Teams, to ensure emergency evacuation arrangements are effective.

## **Health and Safety Audit Programme**

Assist in the timely planning, delivery and resolution of a programme of health and safety audits, to include:

- Liaison between third party auditors and auditees, plus any other interested parties to relay audit feedback.
- Conducting internal health and safety audits with various focuses (general, chemical, agricultural, work equipment, etc.).
- Verification of close-out of actions arising from internal and third party audits.
- Liaising with audit areas and reporting to AFBI Head of Health & Safety & Compliance Branch and Health & Safety Manager on audit close-out.
- Technical input to local health and safety audits.
- Assistance in relation to the actioning of audit findings pertaining to internal and third party audits on specific issues such as biological safety, agricultural facilities and dangerous goods transport.
- Auditing of compliance with specific elements of HSMS Policy and procedures, as per instruction by AFBI Health & Safety Manager.

### **Communications**

Ensure health and safety information is clearly communicated to appropriate audiences, including through the following:

- Attend relevant AFBI health and safety meetings and committees.
- Communicate health and safety messages using a range of methods and mediums, e.g. AFBI Intranet, presentations, etc.
- Ensure managers and management groups are kept up to date through briefings and reports on important health and safety matters.
- Involvement in formal communication and consultation with recognised staff/employee health and safety representatives.

### **Technical Support**

Provide advice and support to AFBI business units to help ensure policies and procedures are being followed, including through the following:

- Provide advice and support to managers to ensure they have appropriate arrangements in place and staff appointed to carry out the health and safety functions e.g. first aiders, risk assessors, etc.
- Provide advice on, for example, laboratory and agricultural practices.
- Support AFBI Human Resources with regard to any investigations, disciplinary and/or grievance where health and safety advice and guidance is needed.
- Ensure arrangements are in place to provide workers with relevant PPE and that records are maintained of PPE issued.
- Provide advice and input to emergency planning, critical incident management and business continuity planning for AFBI.

**This list is not exhaustive and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management.**

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must demonstrate that they possess the following criteria, by the closing date for applications:

- 1a) A degree (2:2 level or above in any discipline) **and** a recognised professional occupational health and safety qualification at Diploma level or above which enables the applicant to meet the requirements for IOSH 'Graduate Member' grade (GradIOSH)\*.

**AND**

- 1b) A minimum of 2 years' practical experience of operating as a health and safety advisor within a complex organisation\*\* including provision of advice/guidance/training to a wide range of audiences.

**OR**

- 2a) A recognised professional occupational health and safety qualification at Diploma level or above which enables the applicant to meet the requirements for IOSH 'Graduate Member' grade (GradIOSH)\*.

**AND**

- 2b) A minimum of 4 years' practical experience of operating as a health and safety advisor within a complex organisation\*\* including provision of advice/guidance/training to a wide range of audiences.

**OR**

- 3a) A recognised professional occupational health and safety qualification at Certificate level or above which enables the applicant to meet the requirements for IOSH 'Technical Member' grade (TechIOSH)\*\*\*.

**AND**

- 3b) A minimum of 5 years' practical experience of operating as a health and safety advisor within a complex organisation\*\* including provision of advice/guidance/training to a wide range of audiences.

**AND**

- 4) Demonstrable experience operating health and safety management systems and relevant procedures within a complex organisation\*\* (e.g. HSG65, USHA HASMAP, BS OHSAS 18001, ISO45001).
- 5) Hold a full driving licence which enables the holder to drive a car in Northern Ireland.

\* Equivalent to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) Level 6 or any other qualification IOSH assesses as meeting the criteria e.g. Bachelors/PGD/MSc/NQF/QCF Level 6 Diploma (BSC), NVQ Level 5 Diploma, SCQF Level 10 Diploma or cognate degree (i.e. where at least 60% of the degree is directly related to health and safety).

\*\* **Complex organisation** is defined as an organisation with professional or technical disciplines, having a customer base with diverse requirements and a budget of at least £5m and at least 20 employees

\*\*\* Equivalent to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) Level 4 or any other qualification that IOSH assesses as meeting the criteria e.g. NQF/QCF level Certificate (BSC), NVQ Level 3 Certificate, SCQF Level 6, Certificated (NEBOSH), TUC Diploma.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

**Relevant or Equivalent Qualifications:** give the type of qualification and date awarded. If you believe your qualification is equivalent/relevant to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with proof of equivalency, details of modules studied, Marks Awarded and details and justification of equivalency so that a well-informed decision can be made.

## SHORTLISTING

In addition applicants should be aware that should it be necessary to shortlist candidates further to go forward to interview, the Panel will carry out an objective evaluation of the breadth and depth of information provided by candidates in response to Eligibility Criterion 1b, 2b or 3b. This will be completed on a scored basis. Only the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

**Please note:**

- **You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required.**
- **It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.**
- **The panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.**
- **If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.**
- **ONLY the details provided by you in your application form (the employment history and eligibility criteria) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post.**
- **Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk)**

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Essential Criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate competency in Professional Knowledge & Skills pertaining to this post together with the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 3 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

### **What is the NICS competency framework?**

The competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results. Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters as set out in the link below. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course.

Health & Safety Advisor: Higher Scientific Officer (HSO) is analogous to Staff Officer in the NICS. Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk).

**It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of the assessment / interview criteria as outlined below. You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 3 of the relevant competence areas.**

## INTERVIEW CRITERIA

The selection process will include a competence based interview.

### 1. Professional/Specialist/Technical Ability

- Demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of health and safety legislation and practice;
- Applies knowledge and skills in the effective implementation of health and safety policy and procedure; and
- Applies knowledge and skills in the effective assessment and control of health and safety/biosafety risks.

**Marks available: 40**      **Minimum Standard: 24**

### 2. Changing and Improving

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. For all staff, it is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways.

**Marks available: 20**

### 3. Collaborating and Partnering

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the NICS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

**Marks available: 20**      **Minimum Standard: 12**

### 4. Leading and Communicating

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens.

**Marks available: 20**

## **5. Managing a Quality Service**

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches appropriately and effectively to support service delivery.

***Marks available: 20      Minimum Standard: 12***

**Total Marks Available: 120**

**Overall pass mark: 72**

### **COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS**

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly.

### **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI HQ, 18a Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5PX during week commencing Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## **INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

**If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:**

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

**A competence-based interview does however require you to:**

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfill the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

**In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:**

- Situation – briefly outline the situation;
- Task – what was your objective, what were you trying to achieve;
- Action – what did you actually do, what was your unique contribution;
- Result – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competences. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

## SELECTION PROCESS

### The Merit Principle

Appointments to AFBI are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

### Making your application

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility/shortlisting criteria.

### Guidance for Applicants

- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline;
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your Branch or your job.
- State clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. State "I" statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be checked out at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your *unique* role the panel are interested in, not that of your team or business area.

### Application Form Submission

You can apply online at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

- Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application.
- **All** parts of the application form **must** be completed by the applicant before this application can be considered. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.
- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- When completing the online application, your information is saved as you move through the pages. You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button. Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- Please note - the session timeout for the online application is 40 minutes, if you do not save or change page within this time you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.

- Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this will result in disqualification.

### **Changes in personal circumstances**

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances.

### **Communication between HRConnect and you**

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

### **Transgender Requirements**

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact HRConnect. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

### **Further appointments from this competition**

Where a further permanent or fixed term position in AFBI is identified which is considered broadly similar to that outlined in this candidate information booklet, consideration will be given to filling the position from this competition. The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to one year.

### **Disability Requirements**

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

### **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

**Please note, this form is regarded as part of your application and failure to complete and return it will result in disqualification.**

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement to which AFBI adheres please refer to page 29.

Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and Females as these groups are currently under-represented within AFBI.

### **AFBI is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

### **Assessment Information**

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility/shortlisting criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

### **Employment Requirements**

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.

Entry to the United Kingdom is controlled under the Immigration Act 1971. Everyone who does not have the right of abode is subject to immigration control. You should check whether there are any restrictions on your stay or your freedom to take or change employment before you apply for a post. If you are invited to interview we will ask you to provide documentation confirming that you are entitled to work in the UK, under the terms of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

Advice on entitlement to work may be obtained from the Home Office website, [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).

### **Nationality Requirements**

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

### **Vetting Procedures**

#### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post the level of vetting is a Baseline Standard. For this check you will be required to provide the following:

- a) Your passport OR
- b) A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) AND your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).
- c) Other acceptable documents are listed on [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).
- d) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI through Experian. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is:

### **Basic Disclosure Certificate**

You should not put off applying for a post because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner, and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made. Further information regarding policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the vetting process is available at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) under Useful Information.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni)

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: <http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>. Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment. Failure to complete the application form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

### **Order of Merit**

The selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment. The selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. The order of merit is valid for one year.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **Pensions**

New entrants who join the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme.

Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:

[www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni)

### **OR**

if you are unable to access the website please contact Civil Service Pensions as follows:

Civil Service Pensions  
Waterside House  
75 Duke Street  
Londonderry  
BT47 6FP  
Tel: 02871 319000  
Email: [cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk)

### **Feedback**

AFBI is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF  
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

**Contact details:**

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect at the address above or by;

**Email:** [Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net](mailto:Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net)

**Tel:** 0800 1 300 330

**Fax:** 028 9024 1665

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

### Policy Statement

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below:

“The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has a strong and clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the NICS on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere where they are treated with dignity and respect. We aim to provide opportunities for all sections of the community and continue to strive to create an inclusive working environment in which difference is recognised and valued. Bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and giving each person the opportunity to contribute their skills and experience will help us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve”.

We all want to work in an harmonious workplace where we feel valued, respected and included, irrespective of gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race/ethnic origin, religious belief or political opinion, disability, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation and age.

In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best people at all levels. Our approach is based on three key principles:-

**Equality** – we promote equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

**Diversity** – we accept each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity – and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders.

**Inclusion** – we create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with, and adheres to NICS values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and to apply this policy. Both Management and Trade Union Side are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation.

## **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

Equality monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information that is relevant to and necessary for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between different categories of persons. This section sets out what information is collected, the reasons for doing so and what it is used for.

You should note that the Monitoring Form is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return it will result in disqualification. The Monitoring Form will be processed separately and neither the form nor the details contained in it will be available to those considering your application.

Monitoring equality and diversity in the workforce enables the NICS to examine how our employment policies and processes are working and to identify areas where these appear to be impacting disproportionately on certain groups of staff.

### **Legislative Context**

This section explains the reasons for gathering this information by setting out the legislative background.

#### **Gender**

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of his or her sex. Information on gender is also provided in the annual statutory monitoring the, as required by the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally.

#### **Age**

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 make it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on grounds of age. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different ages and age groups.

#### **Community Background**

The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The Order also requires the NICS to submit an annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This takes the form of a statistical return, providing information on the gender and community background composition of all people working in the NICS at the 1st January each year.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief and political opinion. Following guidance issued in July 2007 by the Equality Commission for NI the NICS has decided to use “community background” information as a proxy for political opinion.

## **Disability**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) provides protection for disabled persons against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The DDA defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

**Physical Impairment:** this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs etc) caused through illness by accident or from birth. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease.

**Mental Impairment:** this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability, and social functioning.

**Substantial:** put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carryout normal day to day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

**Long-term adverse effect:** the effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one. A person with a life expectancy of less than 12 months is of course covered if the effect is likely to last for the whole of that time.

**A normal day to day activity:** this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something so individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

### ***What sort of effect must there be?***

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech; hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; ability to take part in normal social interaction and form social relationships; or perception of risk of physical danger.

### ***What happens if the effects are reduced by medication or other treatment?***

Broadly speaking, the effects that matter are those that would be present if there was no medication or treatment taking place. The exception is people who wear spectacles or contact lenses when what matters is the effect that remain while the spectacles or contact lenses are being used.

### ***Are there any types of condition covered by special provisions in the DDA?***

Yes, because some people with particular conditions might not otherwise be counted as disabled. These are provisions covering:

Recurring or fluctuating conditions such as arthritis, where the effects can sometimes be less than substantial, which are treated as continuing to have a substantial adverse effect so long as that effect is likely to recur; Conditions which progressively deteriorate, such as motor neuron disease, which count as having a substantial effect from the first time they have any effect at all on ability to carry out normal day to day activities even if it is not substantial, so long as there is eventually likely to be a substantial adverse effect; and People with cancer, HIV, or multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled people from the point of diagnosis, regardless of whether or not they have any symptoms.

***Are any conditions not covered?***

Yes, the following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:  
Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from the substance being medically prescribed);  
Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition;  
Tendency to set fires, or steal, or physically or sexually abuse other persons;  
Exhibitionism and voyeurism;  
Severe disfigurements consisting of tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing are not treated as having substantial adverse effects.

***What if someone has recovered from a disability?***

Much of the DDA also applies to people who have had a disability in the past (for example, someone who was disabled by mental ill health) but have now fully recovered. People who were registered disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (NI) 1945 both on 12 January 1995 and 2 December 1996 will be regarded as having had a disability in the past if they do not in any case fall within the definition of the DDA.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without.

**Race**

The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial group(s).

**Sexual Orientation**

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) Order 2003 makes it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. In order to monitor the effectiveness of NICS policies information is gathered on sexual orientation. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation.

### **Marital Status**

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended), makes it unlawful to discriminate against married persons and civil partners in employment. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different marital status.

### **Dependants Status**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions in NI, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

### **Confidentiality of Monitoring Information**

The following general principles will be applied to all individual monitoring information:-

- individual monitoring information will be afforded a high degree of confidentiality;
- misuse of monitoring information will be viewed as a disciplinary offence; and
- individual monitoring information will only be disclosed to members of staff or officials of a trade union, members of which are employed in the NICS, if it is necessary to do so for the appropriate discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the above internal safeguards on the protection of equality monitoring information generally, the confidentiality of community background monitoring information is protected through Regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (FETO). These make it a criminal offence, subject to specific exceptions, for an employer or employee to disclose information on the community background of an individual which has been obtained, or is used, for the purpose of monitoring under FETO.

As with other forms of personal data, the obtaining, use, storage and disclosure of monitoring information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Monitoring information is held on computer and is protected by a high level of security. Access to this data is restricted to those NICS staff, employees of HRConnect and Trade Union officials whose duties make it necessary for them to have it. Misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.