Candidate Information Booklet

IRC215295
Policy Officer – Energy (Maternity Cover)
The Consumer Council

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 27th January 2017
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.
THE CONSUMER COUNCIL BACKGROUND

The Consumer Council is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established through the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984. Our principal statutory duty is to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland.

The Consumer Council has specific statutory duties in relation to energy, postal services, transport, and water and sewerage. These include considering consumer complaints and enquiries, carrying out research and educating and informing consumers.

CONSUMER COUNCIL MISSION

The Consumer Council is committed to promoting and safeguarding the interests of consumers in NI by empowering them and providing a strong representative voice to policy-makers, regulators, and service providers.

CONSUMER COUNCIL VALUES

1. Ambition – We seek to deliver the best possible deal for consumers in NI;
2. Excellence – Our work is robust and considered, and bears comparison with the best;
3. Commitment – We do what it takes to provide consumers in NI with the best possible service;
4. Fairness – We will listen to everyone and respect all consumers’ concerns;
5. Teamwork – We will work in a collegiate manner;
6. Honesty – We will operate openly and transparently;
7. Integrity – We are trustworthy and trusted; and
8. Objectivity – We base our conclusions in evidence.
JOB DESCRIPTION

There is currently one temporary full-time position to be filled. The successful candidate will be employed on a Fixed Term Contract basis for a minimum period of 6 months with the possibility of an extension to take the contract period up to 12 months.

Secondment

This post may be filled by secondment of the successful candidate from his/her current employer. Secondment would be on a candidate’s current terms and conditions of service within the salary range stated below.

It is advisable that candidates interested in a secondment option make their employers aware that under TCC secondment arrangements the successful candidate will remain an employee of their current employer. The necessary administration arrangements will be agreed with TCC and the employer before a secondment arrangement commences.

“Secondment” means a voluntary transfer from a permanent employer for a fixed period which does not sever the employment relationship of the person seconded with the permanent employer.

The Consumer Council

The Consumer Council is an independent employer. Its staff, while not civil servants, are employed on Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) terms and conditions.

Salary

The salary for the post will be within the EOI range of £25,871 - £27,271 (under review) 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

Location

The successful candidate be based at Seatem House, 28-32 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8EN. The premises are wheelchair accessible and there is an accessible toilet.

Annual Leave

In addition to the 12 standard public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days. The leave year runs from 1 February to 31 January.
**Working Hours**

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week (Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm), totaling 37 hours. A flexible working scheme is in operation.

**Travel**

The successful candidate will be required to travel on official duty throughout Northern Ireland. The post holder must have access to a form of transport which will enable them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

**Pension**

New entrants who join The Consumer Council are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme. Further information can be obtained on page 17.

**Equality Commitments**

Candidates will be expected to contribute to the Consumer Council fulfilling all its commitments in relation to its Equality Scheme, and under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Probation**

The post holder will serve 12 months probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. Performance will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

**Further Information**

Further information about the post may be obtained from Fiona Lavery by email at Fiona.Lavery@consumercouncil.org.uk or by telephone on 028 9025 1628.

If you have any queries about the competition process you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330, or email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net.
KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Key duties and responsibilities under the guidance of the Head of Policy (Energy) will include:

Policy and research

• Assist with the formulation, development and implementation of Consumer Council’s energy and other consumer policy;

• Carry out investigations and research in relation to energy and other consumer issues;

• Undertake projects in relation to energy and other consumer issues with guidance from line management;

• Follow up and research issues arising from complaints related to energy issues in conjunction with the Consumer Support section; and

• Provide management information on issues related to energy;

Representation

• Build and maintain relations with key stakeholders;

• Contribute to campaigns that promote Consumer Council policies;

• Represent the Consumer Council at committee meetings and facilitate consumer panels and focus groups;

• Promote the Consumer Council’s role giving particular focus to disadvantaged groups;

• Prepare written papers, reports and letters; and

• Undertake any other duties of a nature appropriate to the post as may be required from time to time by line management.

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, by the closing date for applications provide evidence in their application form which demonstrates that they satisfy the following essential criteria.

1. A minimum of two years relevant experience in the last five years of contributing to the development or change of public or social policy;

2. A minimum of two years relevant experience in the last five years of undertaking research using a range of research methodologies;

3. Evidence of building and maintaining effective partnerships and good relations with internal and external stakeholders;

4. Evidence of preparing written reports, briefing papers and letters for internal and external audiences; and

5. Evidence of preparing information for public consumption, for example, factsheets, website content and information leaflets.

SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

In addition, applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criteria will be applied in order:

1. Experience of creating and delivering effective presentations targeted to a range of audience types.

2. Experience of organising information events or workshops.

3. Experience of lobbying on policy issues.

In providing evidence for each of the criteria it will be essential that candidates draw upon specific examples of work they have undertaken to illustrate the extent to which they possess the experience and skills required. It will not be sufficient simply to list the duties and responsibilities of posts held.
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.
PERSON SPECIFICATION

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 2 for the purposes 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 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 2 should be demonstrating level 1 as a matter of course.

The Policy Officer – Energy is analogous to Executive Officer 1 in the NICS.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service competency framework can be accessed through 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.
The selection process will include a written exercise and a competence based interview.

WRITTEN EXERCISE

Before the competence based interview, candidates will be required to undertake a written exercise.

All details of the exercise will be provided on the day of interview and 30 minutes will be given to consider the information provided and prepare your response which you will then talk through with the panel at the start of the interview.

Appropriate writing material will be provided for candidates’ use. No other materials or visual aids will be permitted unless required as a reasonable adjustment. No personal documentation may be brought in to the pre-interview room. The only materials candidates will be permitted to bring into interview will be those prepared in the pre-interview room.

The exercise will be used to assess against the following competencies
- Making Effective Decisions
- Leading & Communicating

Marks Available: 20 Minimum standard: 12

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview:

1. Seeing the Big Picture

Seeing the big picture is about having an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how your role fits with, and supports, organisational objectives and the wider public needs. For all staff, it is about focusing your contribution on the activities which will meet Departmental and Programme for Government goals and deliver the greatest value.

Marks available: 20 Minimum standard: 12

2. Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum standard: 12
3. Leading & Communicating

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 Minimum Standard: 12

4. 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

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 to support service delivery.

Marks available: 20 Minimum standard: 12

6. Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum standard: 12

Total marks available: 140
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 Belfast from week commencing 20th February 2017.
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 The Consumer Council 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

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat 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.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write “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 Division.

Application Form Submission

- 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.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted. Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1st class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is also the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to HRConnect. HRConnect will not accept any application where they are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.
• Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
• Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
• 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.

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.

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.

Further appointments from this competition

Where a further position in The Consumer Council 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 The Consumer Council adheres please refer to page 20.

THE CONSUMER COUNCIL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

**Assessment Information**

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment brings 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 The Consumer Council 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. 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.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is a criminal offence for anyone who is included on a barred list to work or seek work, in regulated activity.

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: [http://www.accessni.gov.uk/](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. This can be downloaded from the AccessNI website. Guidance notes of the completion of the form are also included on the website. 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 above 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 Consumer Council 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

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@finance-ni.gov.uk

Feedback

The Consumer Council 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
Please apply online or post your hardcopy completed application form to the HRConnect Recruitment Team:

HRConnect
PO Box 1089
2nd Floor
The Metro Building
6-9 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 9EW

NOTE: Late applications or applications received by fax or email will not be accepted.

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
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 The Consumer Council 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 carryout 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.