

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**

**IRC258451**

**Legal Officer**

**Commercial Section - Crown  
Solicitor's Office**

**Department of Finance (DoF)**

**Completed Application Forms  
must be submitted to  
HRConnect no later than 12  
noon (UK time) on  
*Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020***

**Please retain a copy of this  
booklet for your reference  
throughout the selection  
process.**

## **Department of Finance (DoF)**

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

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account, including junk mail folder, 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.

### **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Responsibilities</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Terms and Conditions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Assessment Process</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Guidance for Applicants</b>	<b>15</b>

## **FOREWORD**

This competition is to fill one Legal Officer vacancy in the Crown Solicitor's Office.

The Crown Solicitor's Office participates with other legal service providers in the Government Legal Service for Northern Ireland (GLSNI), an umbrella organisation that brings together legal staff working in a number of Departments and Agencies, in both the devolved and non-devolved sectors, creating new opportunities for career development and training. GLSNI operates alongside the NI Civil Service of the Future reform agenda, and this post will offer an exciting opportunity for fast, challenging, agile and tech-enabled working.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Crown Solicitor's Office**

The Crown Solicitor's Office is engaged exclusively in legal work for the public service. The office provides a service to ministers and departments of the UK Government, to agencies of UK departments and to some non-departmental public bodies and public officers.

Section 35 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 (as amended) provides for a Crown Solicitor for Northern Ireland to be appointed by the Advocate General for Northern Ireland. Under Section 35 (as amended) the Crown Solicitor "must make his services available to any Minister or department of the Government of the United Kingdom and may make his services available to any Northern Ireland Minister or Northern Ireland department or any other public body or holder of public office."

The Office provides a service to ministers and departments of the UK Government, to agencies of UK departments, to some non-departmental public bodies and public officers (such as the Chief Constable of the Police Service for Northern Ireland) and undertakes some debt recoveries for the NI Administration. Since the completion of devolution on 12 April 2010 the Crown Solicitor also supports the Advocate General for Northern Ireland in the discharge of his functions.

The work of the Office is litigation orientated. The range of litigation is wide and includes: employer's liability cases, legacy inquests, claims involving allegations of unlawful conduct by the police and security forces, industrial tribunal and fair employment cases, judicial review, commercial and chancery cases, debt recovery and condemnation proceedings.

In addition, the office carries out a certain amount of non-contentious work such as 'Bona Vacantia', which involves the administration of the estates of persons who have died intestate and without known relatives and the collection of assets of dissolved companies and failed trusts.

The legal work of the office is carried out in two divisions each with a Legal Clerical Unit. In addition there is an office wide administrative division. The Crown Solicitor's Office is funded by the Northern Ireland Office and is required to recover its full running costs. The Office is located in the Royal Courts of Justice, Chichester Street, Belfast.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The successful candidate will be appointed as a Legal Officer in the Commercial Section of Division A of the Crown Solicitor's Office. This post requires conduct of a case load including Bona Vacantia, Conveyancing, Commercial and Insolvency Litigation.

### Bona Vacantia

Undertake casework relating to the identification, collection and administration of bona vacantia estates and dissolved companies including:-

- Investigating and analysing Companies House documentation
- Investigating and analysing title documentation and searches
- Applying statutory requirements and guidelines in all casework
- Considering value of lands (including potential natural hazards such as contamination) and legal impact of easements, prescriptive rights, adverse possession, clawback and overage provisions, restrictive covenants, mortgages and charges, jurisdiction
- Drafting disclaimer documentation and reporting to line manager in a timely manner to ensure disclaimer effected within specified time limits
- Dealing with disposal of property and all conveyancing arising from bona vacantia casework

### Conveyancing

Provision of legal advice and services, in a public law context, in relation to commercial and property transactions including: -

- Acquisition and disposal of land
- Drafting and negotiating commercial leases, deeds of surrender, break notices, and related documentation
- Providing advices on landlord and tenant law and business tenancies
- Negotiating and settling easements, licence agreements and related documentation
- Preparation, completion and registration of mortgage/charges and related security documentation in favour of client departments and agencies
- Providing advices on property law disputes including for example dilapidations claims, boundary disputes and rights of way

### Commercial and Insolvency Litigation

- Representing client departments and agencies (to include advocacy subject to rights of audience) before the Bankruptcy and Chancery Masters in connection with insolvency proceedings and related High Court litigation
- Liaising with witnesses, legal representatives, and litigants in person
- Working collaboratively with the client and Counsel in drafting pleadings and other documents, assembling instructions to Counsel, instructing Counsel at consultations and in hearings

- This includes assisting with litigation at courts and tribunals in relation to for example: commercial and chancery cases, debt recovery, forfeiture and condemnation proceedings and prosecution of offences under the Insolvency and Companies regime.

#### General

- To provide accurate and timely legal advice to client departments and agencies on all areas of law that impacts, or may impact, on the work of the client organisation.
- To provide advice to client departments and agencies on legal issues arising from the departments and agencies.
- To work collaboratively with client departments and agencies in the identification and management of legal risks to the organisation.
- To undertake operational, policy or litigation casework in which client departments and agencies have an interest or for which they are responsible.
- To manage a range of legal projects using proven methods and techniques.
- To manage resources ensuring these are used effectively in order to maximize benefits, including value for money and efficiency.
- To be part of the Commercial team providing legal services to all Whitehall departments and other public bodies in Northern Ireland with a particular emphasis on the work areas outlined above.
- To manage own case load efficiently and assist direct Line Manager and other members of the Commercial team.
- Such other duties as line management may direct.

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

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

There is currently 1 permanent, full time vacancy.

Further appointments may be made from this competition should NICS positions become vacant which have similar duties and responsibilities.

### **Location**

This vacancy will be based in the Royal Courts of Justice, Chichester Street, Belfast. Due to the current situation with Covid-19, the vacancy will also involve home working as necessary.

### **Salary**

Salary will be within the range £38,017 - £41,799 (under review) within which pay progression will be performance related.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale. If the successful candidate is an existing civil servant, normal pay on promotion/re-grading arrangements will apply.

### **Practising certificates**

The annual cost of the Law Society /Bar practising certificate will be met by the legal office to which the successful candidate is placed.

### **Pensions**

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension package. 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)

### **Holidays**

In addition to public and privilege holidays, currently 12 days, the annual leave allowance will be 25 days, rising to 30 days after 5 years' service.

### **Hours of Work**

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 42 hours per week which includes a 1 hour meal break (37 hours net) Monday to Friday. Crown Solicitor's Office works flexi-time.

The postholder will be required to participate in an out of hours and emergency cover rota if one is in place at any time within the business area.

## **Travel**

Access to a form of transport will be required in order to fulfil the responsibilities of this post.

Travel throughout Northern Ireland will be required and travel nationally may also be required.

## **Vetting**

As a minimum this post requires a basic security check. In Crown Solicitor's Office the vetting clearance requirement is Security Check (SC).

All applicants must be prepared to be submitted to these checks as part of the recruitment process.

## **Probation**

Confirmation of appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 1 year. If performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory the appointment may be terminated.

## **Career Development**

The NICS is committed to career development and offers attractive career prospects across a wide variety of roles and professions. Career development is an integral part of the performance management system. Personal Development Plans identify learning and development needs with a view to enhancing skills and capabilities. NI Civil Servants have access to a wide range of internal job opportunities, including secondments with external organisations and are encouraged and supported in proactively managing their career.

## **Conflict of Interest**

It is a basic requirement of all Civil Servants that their private activities should not bring them in to conflict with their official duties.

Conflict of Interest is not limited to the individual's own private, financial or other interests, as family, friends and associates may also have dealings which affect the Department's business directly or indirectly. Therefore to avoid any conflict or potential conflict and to demonstrate impartiality to the public at all times, an officer must not, without prior approval, engage in any activity which could be considered to be in conflict with official business.

## **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may telephone Derbhile McKearney on 02890546030 or email [Derbhile.McKearney@csoni.gov.uk](mailto:Derbhile.McKearney@csoni.gov.uk)

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

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications:

1. Be qualified as a barrister or solicitor entitled to practise in Northern Ireland and hold a practising certificate or be in a position to do so by the date of appointment.

**AND**

2. Have a minimum of 2 years' post qualification\* experience gained within the last 5 years in commercial conveyancing and demonstrate evidence in this area of:
  - Working as part of a team
  - Providing cost effective legal advice
  - Making effective decisions leading to positive outcomes

**\* Qualification: From date of admission to the roll of solicitors / post call to the bar**

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 (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body).

If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made.

You will be required to provide documentary evidence of your qualifications at interview so please ensure you have these readily available.

## 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 criterion will be used:

1. The Panel will carry out an objective evaluation of the depth and breadth of information provided by candidates in response to eligibility criterion 2

The shortlisting criterion will be scored with only the top scoring candidates progressing to interview.

**The Panel will complete this assessment against the information provided by applicants in response to the eligibility criteria.**

Should it be required, the panel reserves the right to interview further candidates after an initial round of interviews.

**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 selection 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.**
- **The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be explored 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.**
- **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.**
- **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. Please do not include your name in the employment history or eligibility criteria sections.**

**The NICS Competency framework can be accessed via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)**

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The selection process will consist of a competence based interview.

### 1. 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: 30

Minimum standard: 18

### 2. 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: 30

Minimum standard: 18

### 3. 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: 30

### 4. Delivering Value for Money

Delivering value for money involves the efficient, effective and economic use of taxpayers' money in the delivery of public services. For all staff, it means seeking out and implementing solutions which achieve a good mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay, thus reducing the risk of fraud and error.

People who do this well base their decisions on evidenced information and follow agreed processes and policies, challenging these appropriately where they appear to prevent good value for money.

Marks available: 30

## **5. 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.

Marks available: 30

## **6. 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: 30

**Total Marks Available: 180**

**Overall Pass Mark: 108**

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place remotely via Webex due to current COVID-19 restrictions during week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

## **NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS competency framework at level 3.

The NICS 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. 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.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service competency framework can be accessed via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

**It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of selection process. Should you require assistance in accessing the competency framework please contact HRConnect.**

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

### APPLICATION FORM

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

Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before making your application and retain a copy for your reference. 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. **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.

#### **Please note:**

- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms, unless it is specifically requested in the application form and candidate information booklet.
- All applications must be submitted by the advertised closing date and time.
- 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. State for the reader who may not know your employer, your branch or your job.
- 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.
- 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.
- You must click SUBMIT once you have finished your online application. You will receive an acknowledgement email. Please contact HRConnect if you do not receive an acknowledgment email within 24 hrs.

## **Help with making your application**

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office - contact details are available on NIDirect: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices-jobcentres-and-social-security-offices>

You can also get advice or assistance from local disability employment organisations. To find out more about local disability employment organisations contact Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), an umbrella group for individuals and organisations promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to access and maintain employment, email [info@niuse.org.uk](mailto:info@niuse.org.uk), tel. 0044 (0)28 71 377709, text phone 0044 (0) 28 71 372077

## **GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

### **INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

**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 to demonstrate the range of behaviours associated with the competences being assessed. 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.

For professional and technical posts, questions may be framed in the context of professional elements of the post.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **The Merit Principle**

In accordance with the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code, appointments to the NICS are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Further information on the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at [www.nicscommissioners.org](http://www.nicscommissioners.org).

### **NICSHR Privacy Notice**

NICSHR are committed to protecting your privacy. HRConnect manage job applications on behalf of NICSHR, in line with the NICSHR privacy notice available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

### **Offers of Employment**

Candidates will only receive one offer of appointment which, if not accepted, will generally result in withdrawal from the competition.

### **Changes in personal circumstances and contact details**

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances. It is important that HRConnect have up to date contact details.

### **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.

### **Merit List**

**HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed.** It is presently intended that the merit list for this competition should remain extant for a period of one year. However you should be aware that circumstances may arise in the future where it will be

necessary to extend the currency of the merit list for a further period. The merit list will only be extended where cogent practical reasons for doing so arise.

### **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.

### **Documentation**

Identification documents to satisfy the Nationality and Security requirements of the post will be required. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You will be required to bring documentary evidence of your qualifications / professional membership to assessment.

You should ensure that the required documents are readily available.

### **Right to Work and Nationality Requirements**

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom and satisfy the Nationality requirements for appointment to the NICS. Applicants must be either:

- (i) A UK national; or
- (ii) A Commonwealth citizen; or
- (iii) A British Protected Person; or
- (iv) An EEA national; or
- (v) A Swiss National; or
- (vi) A person who is not an EEA or Swiss national, but is a family member of an EEA national who has moved to the UK from another EEA Member State for an approved purpose.

Further guidance on Nationality requirements is available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

## **Security**

### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For Legal Officer post in the NICS 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) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

Further information regarding the Baseline Personnel Security Standard, including other acceptable documents is available via [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

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;

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

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.

### 3. Security Check (SC): as point 2 plus credit reference check.

## **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

**Please note the Equal Opportunities monitoring section of the application form is mandatory in order to submit an application.**

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to the DoF website [www.finance-ni.gov.uk](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk).

**As young people (people under the age of 35), people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities are currently under represented in NICS, we would particularly welcome applications from these groups.**

**The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**  
All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit

**Feedback**

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. 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**