

**Candidate
Information
Booklet**

**IRC263407
Enforcement Officer Trading Standards
Service
Department for the Economy (DfE)**

**Completed Application Forms
must be submitted to
HRConnect no later than 12
noon (UK time) on
*Friday 12th March 2021***

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

Department for the Economy (DfE)

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.

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BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY

The Department for the Economy (DfE) was established in 2016. Its responsibilities include:

- wider economic policy, including specific areas like Energy, Tourism and Telecoms
- the operation of a range of employment and skills programmes
- oversight and funding of the further and higher education sectors
- various aspects of employment law and consumer protection
- the management and operation of various EU funding programmes

VISION

DfE's Vision is a globally competitive economy that works for everyone.

MISSION STATEMENT

DfE's Mission is to develop and implement agile policies and programmes which promote a competitive, sustainable and inclusive economy through investment in:

- skills;
- economic infrastructure;
- research and innovation; and
- business development.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

DfE aims to:

1. accelerate innovation and research
2. enhance education, skills and employability
3. drive inclusive, sustainable growth
4. succeed in global markets
5. build the best economic infrastructure
6. deliver a regulatory environment that optimises economic opportunities for business and commerce, while also protecting consumers and workers
7. ensure the Department has effective governance, including programme and project management, and manages its resources, both financial and staff.

STRUCTURE

DfE is organised into five separate Groups, detailed below, each under the management of a Deputy Secretary.

- (i) EU Exit Preparation and Transition
- (ii) Economic Strategy
- (iii) Management Services and Regulation
- (iv) Skills and Education
- (v) Energy

ABOUT THE TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE

The Trading Standards Service (TSS) is a consumer protection organisation whose role is to promote and maintain fair trading, protect consumers and help reputable businesses to thrive within Northern Ireland. It is responsible for the enforcement of a variety of consumer protection legislation, including the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and the Weights and Measures (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. TSS also operates a consumer advice service, Consumerline, which provides consumer civil law advice to businesses and consumers.

The Service is part of DfE's Management Services and Regulation Group, sitting within the Business and Employment Regulation Division. Headquarters are in Belfast, although TSS also has small regional offices in Armagh, Ballymena, Enniskillen and Derry/Londonderry.

TSS works to protect consumers and support legitimate business. It does this through:

- investigating complaints about businesses where a possible breach of consumer protection legislation has been identified;
- conducting inspections to check business compliance with consumer protection legislation, including testing and approving weighing and measuring equipment;
- carrying out targeted projects aimed at increasing consumer and business awareness of specific issues, as well as identifying and tackling business non-compliance with consumer protection legislation;
- advising businesses about their legal rights and obligations in respect of consumer protection; and
- advising consumers about their legal rights when purchasing goods or services.

Trading Standards Enforcement Officers have various powers granted to them under Schedule 5 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015. An Enforcement Officer's main powers include the power to enter business premises, the powers of inspection, and powers to secure or seize material that might be required as evidence relevant to an investigation.

There are a wide range of options available to TSS to deal with businesses that break the law, although the precise options vary depending on the nature of the breach of consumer protection law.

In most cases, businesses are keen to comply with the law and to avoid the risks and expenses of formal enforcement action. Many breaches of consumer protection legislation are resolved through advice and agreed remedial actions by the business (which might include changing products, systems, labelling or advertising and/or arranging redress for customers who have been affected by a breach).

However, TSS always has formal enforcement options available. These options are more likely in cases where there is a serious breach (in terms of the detriment to consumers or to other businesses through unfair competitive advantage) or where the business has failed to respond to or engage with informal attempts to secure compliance. TSS publishes its Enforcement Policy at:

www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/trading-standards-service-enforcement-policy

In circumstances where prosecution is warranted, Trading Standards Enforcement Officers are often required to give evidence in court proceedings.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Trading Standards Enforcement Officers perform various functions including carrying out inspections, investigating complaints, advising businesses and responding to service requests. Therefore responsibilities for this post will include:

- checking that goods/services comply with legislation
- visiting businesses to check legal compliance or to investigate complaints
- investigating complaints, taking witness statements and obtaining evidence to support the most appropriate outcome
- undertaking pro-active enforcement exercises to deal with targeted trade sectors and rogue traders such as doorstep crime, counterfeiters and scams.
- interviewing businesses under caution in compliance with The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 Codes of Practice
- producing investigation and prosecution reports for submission to the TSS senior management with a recommendation to refer files to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) or the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO).
- presenting evidence in court
- advising consumers and businesses about consumer protection law.
- processing investigations in accordance with all relevant policies and procedures and that full records of decisions are made at each stage.
- liaising with the PPS and DSO on the management of cases following their submission and a direction to prosecute.
- contribute to a regular media output which helps to increase business compliance, consumer confidence and an enhanced and positive awareness of TSS
- liaise and maintain effective relationships with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to support the delivery of enforcement programmes/activity outcomes both in NI and GB.
- contribute to the continued development and implementation of a modern, effective learning and training model for TSS.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

There are currently five permanent, full-time Trading Standards Enforcement Officer positions to be filled.

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

Location

Successful candidates may be based in any of the Trading Standards Offices across Northern Ireland (Armagh, Ballymena, Belfast, Enniskillen or Derry/Londonderry). Management will try to accommodate location preferences of candidates where possible. Regular travel to Trading Standards Headquarters in Belfast, and some travel to Great Britain, will be necessary in order to complete training.

Any future posts that arise from this competition may be in any of the locations listed above.

Salary

Salary will be within the range £27,845 - £28,730 (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.

Vetting

The successful candidates will be required to be cleared to Access NI Basic level check.

Allowances

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) travel allowances are payable for business related travel.

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

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. Most offices work flexi-time. Additionally, successful candidates may occasionally be required to work outside of conditioned hours as part of investigations or work undertaken by Trading Standards. This may include evenings, weekends, bank and public holidays, when required.

Travel

The successful candidate will be required to travel on official duty frequently and regularly throughout Northern Ireland. This includes travel to remote and rural locations, often inaccessible by public transport. It is therefore essential that applicants have access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full, in line with the NICS HR Travel and Subsistence Policy.

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 Bronagh Doherty on 02890253911 or email Bronagh.doherty@economy-ni.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

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications have **either**:

- 1 (a) A minimum of 2 years' experience, gained within the last 7 years, of working in a regulatory or criminal justice environment, which includes providing advice to the public, collecting evidence and carrying out interviews under the Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice);

AND

- (b) A minimum of 2 years' experience, gained within the last 7 years, demonstrating when you have taken personal responsibility for managing the successful outcome of an investigation in a criminal justice environment.

OR

2. A minimum of 2 years' experience, gained within the last 7 years, of working in a Trading Standards or Environmental Health Service which includes providing advice to businesses or consumers, collecting evidence and interviewing members of the public.

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 used:

1. Have a qualification from The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Administration in Investigative Practice or equivalent.

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.

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

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The selection process will include a competence based interview.

1. 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

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. 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

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

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: 20

6. 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

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.

No notes or personal documentation may be brought into the interview room.

INTERVIEWS

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place via Webex during week commencing 12th April 2021.

NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS competency framework at level 2.

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

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.

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, 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.

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

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) UK national; or
- (ii) National of a Commonwealth country; or
- (iii) National of the Republic of Ireland; or
- (iv) EEA nationals with (or eligible for) status under the EU Settlement Scheme; or
- (v) Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals working in the Civil Service; or
- (vi) Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals who have built up the right to work in the Civil Service; or
- (vii) Certain family members of the relevant EU & Turkish nationals

Further guidance on Nationality requirements is available via www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk.

Security

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For these posts 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.

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. Further information regarding policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the vetting process is available at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk under Useful Information.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via 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.

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.

As Protestants and men are currently known to be under represented at this grade in Northern Ireland Civil Service, and 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**