



Prisoner Custody Officer (30 Hour)

Northern Ireland Prison
Service (NIPS)

IRC302475

Completed Application Forms must be
returned to HRConnect no later than:

12 noon (UK time) on
Friday 17 May 2024

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

Candidate Information Booklet



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Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) as a Prisoner Custody Officer 30 Hour (PCO).

We are looking for individuals from all parts of our community who are motivated, courageous, respectful, resilient and compassionate; people who want to work as part of a professional team in a dynamic environment.

Successful candidates will undergo extensive training and will receive support and guidance as they begin working with people in our care.

PCOs play an important role in helping the Department of Justice to build a safer community in Northern Ireland. You will provide a safe, decent and secure environment for staff, prisoners and visitors.

Prisons are complex and the people in our care can be vulnerable and sometimes challenging. You will join a professional and dedicated organisation focused on reducing the risk of reoffending.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service is a competent, confident and compassionate organisation. If you believe you have what it takes to be Prisoner Custody Officer and want a challenging and rewarding job working where you can make a real difference, then I would encourage you to apply.

Beverley Wall

Director General, Northern Ireland Prison Service



Welcome

The Northern Ireland Prison Service welcome applications from people regardless of their religious belief, race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation.

For more information on diversity & inclusion in the NICS see page 20.

We want to ensure that all applicants have the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability and would refer you to the section on Disability and Reasonable Adjustments on page 20 for details on how we can support you.

If you have any questions, or require any documentation in an alternative format eg: braille, easy read, large print, audio etc. **you should contact HR Connect on 0800 1 300 330 or email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net**

Communication between HRConnect and you

The majority of our communications with you in this recruitment exercise will be by email. Please ensure you provide a valid email address and regularly check your email account and junk folder to make sure you don't miss any important communications from us.

The closing date for completed applications is 12 noon on Friday 17 May 2024.



Late applications will not be accepted.

Before completing your application form, please read this booklet carefully as it outlines the application and assessment process.

This recruitment exercise will be used to fill PCO 30 Hour vacancies.

All appointments to the NICS are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. PCO 30 Hours are expected to carry out their role with dedication and a commitment to the NICS core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

We wish you every success in your application.

About the Northern Ireland Prison Service

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is part of the Department of Justice (DoJ) and plays a vital role in helping to build a safer community in Northern Ireland. Their core purpose is to keep people safe and secure while they are in prison and to work with them so they can address their offending behaviour and play a positive role when they are released.

NIPS core purpose is:

“Building a safer community by challenging and supporting people in our care to change.”

Organisational Structure and Staffing

NIPS is an executive agency of the Department of Justice (DOJ) which is a part of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). It is responsible for the operation and delivery of services within the Northern Ireland prison system.

NIPS comprises the three main prison establishments and the Prisoner Escort and Court Custody Services (PECCS).

Maghaberry Prison – a high security prison, housing adult male long-term sentenced and remand prisoners in separated and integrated conditions.

Magilligan Prison – a medium security prison, housing shorter-term sentenced adult male prisoners. This establishment also has low security accommodation for selected prisoners nearing the end of their sentence.

Hydebank Wood College – a medium to low security establishment accommodating remand and sentenced young men between the ages of 18 and 21 and all female prisoners.

Prisoner Escort and Court Custody Services (PECCS)

Prisoner Custody Officers (PCOs) have responsibility for the safe operation of the cell holding areas in each Courthouse throughout Northern Ireland and for producing prisoners in court rooms when required. Additionally PECCS are a prisoner transport and escorting service for adult males, adult females, young people and children within the Criminal Justice System. Driver/Escort staff use cellular vehicles which hold and deploy, mainly, from Maghaberry Prison.

The main administrative centre for NIPS, Prison Service Headquarters, is located on the Stormont Estate, Belfast, Prison Service College (PSC) is currently located at Hydebank Wood.

Further details on the Northern Ireland Prison Service are available at www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/prisons

Prisoner Custody Officer (30 Hour)

PCO: Key Responsibilities

The main duties of a PCO include:

- the secure supervision of prisoners while on court premises;
- undertaking designated duties in court within the court proceedings (to include the roles of dock officer, assistant dock officer, etc.);
- interacting with NI Court Services and the Judiciary as well as legal representatives and other professionals;
- completion of the necessary documentation in connection with the conveyance of prisoners to and from courts;
- secure escort and supervision of prisoners when in transit between establishments, court venues or hospital locations;
- the secure supervision of prisoners while on all external escorts, including hospital and PSNI productions and UK and international transfers;
- driving appropriate secure vehicles in a safe manner;
- adherence to safer custody policies and procedures; and
- responding to all emergencies in accordance with local contingency plans, operational instructions and Chapter 42 of the Security Manual.

The job of a PCO is a varied one. In the context of being employed within PECCS it falls into two distinct areas:

1. Escorting prisoners to and from courts, hospitals, airports, police stations and other establishments and;
2. Ensuring the safe and secure control of persons in custody at courts, this includes staffing of court docks and the running of the court custody area.

A PECCS Manager is responsible for the day's detail which includes covering the reception desk and recording information of the movement of prisoners, staff and legal representatives coming in and out throughout the court day.

You may be detailed duty in the cell area and be responsible for the safety and secure movement of persons in custody; you will be required to interact with legal representatives, police and other representatives of the judicial system. If detailed to court duty you will interact with people coming into the dock from the custody area and also from the body of the court. This is sometimes stressful for the person before the court as he/she may never have been in this situation before. Good people skills are an essential tool which can reduce the likelihood of incidents arising from unexpected sentences.

PCO Role: Key Responsibilities

The courts you are detailed to vary. Youth Courts and Magistrates Courts are busy bustling places and deal in the main with less serious breaches of the law. You will also find yourself working in Crown Courts where on some occasions long and protracted cases go on for weeks or months. You may be there for just a day, or for the duration of the case, in any event these will be the most serious cases coming before the judicial system.

In a Crown Court as in every court, one officer will be in charge and in due course that could be you. Other officers may be sitting in the dock beside the prisoner or prisoners, these officers are responsible for maintaining secure and safe control of these persons whilst they are in custody or before the court.

We work as a team and although you are detailed to one job you may throughout the day be redeployed to another. The court situation is a fluid one and very open to change. As a PCO you may also be deployed to escort persons in custody to and from medical appointments at hospital. These may be of short duration or be an all day job.

As a valued member of the team you will receive initial training. This is essential to allow you to quickly gather the experience you need to enjoy this interesting and challenging job.

The above list is not exhaustive but gives a good indication of the main duties of the post. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time according to business needs.

Before you apply, ask yourself ... Can you commit?

Working Hours / Location

- NIPS operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year therefore you may be asked to volunteer to work overtime/ additional hours at short notice.
- The operational requirements also mean that you will be needed to work during seasonal holiday periods and bank holidays.

Uniform Requirements

- You will be expected to wear a uniform at all times whilst on duty. A uniform is provided for all new staff which you must wear at all times whilst on duty and when required to do so.
- Each establishment has a set of Governor's Orders pertaining to the standard of dress for staff and you will be expected to maintain a clean, neat and tidy appearance at all times.

Training and Skills

- You must successfully complete a challenging training programme with regular and ongoing assessment.

Professional Standards

- You will be required to deal with individuals who are volatile and often unpredictable.
- You will be required to work in challenging environments and deal with complex and difficult situations.
- You will be required to display a high degree of motivation, be conscientious, resilient and act with a high degree of integrity.
- You will be responsible and accountable for your own actions or omissions.
- NIPS expect all staff to act professionally both on and off duty at all times. It is expected that you maintain the highest standards of integrity at all times and throughout your service.
- NIPS expect all staff to treat colleagues, and those in their custody with respect recognising the need for fairness, impartiality and confidentiality.

- NIPS expects all staff to respect plurality and diversity and not to discriminate against any prisoner on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, age, race, religion, political or other opinion, disability or, in the case of a prisoner, the type of offence alleged or committed by that prisoner.
- NIPS require all staff to respect human rights of those in your care and ensure compliance with Human Rights legislation.
- NIPS require all staff to manage resources efficiently and effectively at all times.

Employment within the NIPS is probationary for a period of one year.



Career Progression within NIPS

Career Progression within NIPS

At the Northern Ireland Prison Service, we want everyone to fulfil their potential. That can mean different things to different people. For some it will mean becoming the best they can at their grade, for others it will be career progression and some may wish to try different roles within the organisation. After completion of your probationary period you will have opportunities to progress and reach your potential.

It could also mean applying for promotion to PECCS Manager or beyond, like this member of the team who shares his experience of working in the Prison Service below.

“I joined in 1992 as a Main Grade Officer and was posted to Maghaberry. I was promoted to a Senior Officer in 2000 and remained at Maghaberry where I worked in Visits, the Remand houses and later in Resettlement. In 2008 I was promoted to Governor and was moved to Hydebank Wood where I worked in various areas including, Residential, Safer Custody, the Prisoner Development Units and Learning and Skills departments. I was transferred to Headquarters in 2015, where I worked in the Professional Standards Unit and then as support to the Director of Prisons before being transferred back to Hydebank Wood on Temporary promotion to Head

of Function in 2018 where I was responsible for the Resettlement and the Learning and Skills Departments. I obtained permanent promotion to Head of Function in 2020 and was transferred to Magilligan Prison where I remained until being posted to PECCS in May 2021.

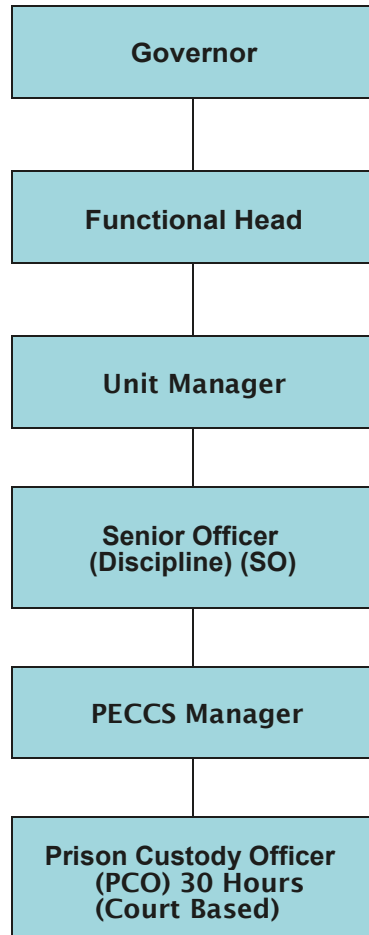
The Prison Service has provided me with a fulfilling and varied career. I have been able to avail of the many opportunities on offer; including getting to work in all the establishments and in the many different departments within the prison setting. This has not only built my personal skill set but also provided me with great job satisfaction. I have been able to experience the impact of prison life on everyone; from those detained in prison to their families, staff, victims and to society in general.

I have seen the Prison Service grow and develop over the years into the organisation it is now, where it values its aims of being a competent, confident and compassionate service with a focus on improving outcomes for those in our care and therefore making our community a safer place for us all.

I would recommend the Prison Service to anyone who is wishing to have a varied and satisfying career in which you have to the opportunity to help make a difference”.

Governor of Prisoner Escorting & Custody Services

Career Progression within NIPS



Terms & Conditions

PCO (30 hour) Terms & Conditions

There are currently a number of permanent vacancies at PCO grade within PECCS. **These positions are based on a 30 Hour per week contract.**

Further appointments will be made from this competition as PCO positions become vacant which require the same eligibility criteria and have similar duties and responsibilities.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants, must by the closing date for applications:

1. Hold a valid full Category B Car Driving Licence which enables the post holder to drive in the UK.
2. Have no more than 3 current active penalty points.
3. Have not been disqualified from driving in the last four years.

Location

PCO 30 Hour staff are based at courts throughout Northern Ireland.

Successful applicants will be allocated to a home station, however as a mobile grade a PCO must be willing to work at any court location when required.

Salary

£18,961 - £21,338

The position attracts a supplementary risk allowance (SRA) which is currently £3,924 per annum (under review) and a boot allowance of £92.80 per annum.

Therefore, the total remuneration on entry is £22,885 (£18,961 basic pay plus £3924 SRA). These rates are under review.

If there is a requirement to drive one of our cellular vehicles a daily driver allowance may be available and is currently payable at a rate of £5, £10 or £15 depending on the size of the vehicle being driven.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale. Pay progression will be as per current NIPS pay policy.

Working Pattern

This PCO position is on a **30 hour per week contract**. Hours worked in excess of 39 hours per week will not be pensionable. You will normally be required to work a 6 hour day between the hours of 09.00 and 17.00 daily.

Please note that your rostered hours will on occasions include weekends and public / privilege holidays for which you will receive your normal rate of pay.

PCO Terms & Conditions

On a number of occasions you will be required to work on Saturdays to meet the needs of the Court. This currently only applies to servicing Laganside Court but may be extended to other Courts in the future.

It is a requirement of the role that you are prepared to work additional hours for which the normal rate of pay will apply. This can include the extension to your normal shift as well as working on a normal rest day, including weekends to meet operational needs.

Annual Leave

The annual leave year starts on 1 February and ends on 31 January of the following year. For staff joining NIPS after the leave year has started, entitlement for the remainder of the year will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

Annual leave entitlement for PCOs is calculated in hours. Therefore including Public and Privilege holidays, the successful candidate will be entitled to the equivalent of:

30 Hour Week - 222 hours per year, rising to 252 hours per year after 5 years' service;

Your annual leave will be pre-detailed by management to match court session times.

Travel

PCO is a mobile grade and you can be required to transfer to a location anywhere within Northern Ireland, both on a permanent basis or for a period of time on detached duty in order to meet operational needs. This means that while a court may be designated as being your home station you may subsequently be required to transfer to any court in any area in order to meet operational needs.

It is your responsibility to bear the cost of daily travel between home and your permanent work place. When you travel to a temporary work place, the mileage you may be entitled to receive is limited to the lesser of either (a) your home to the place visited or (b) the mileage you would have incurred if your journey had begun from your permanent workplace, to the place visited, by the shortest practicable route. Where there are 9 or more attendances a month at the same temporary work place then this travel becomes taxable.

Please note that time spent travelling to and from your post is not included as part of your shift. No additional payments or premiums will be paid for working weekends or public and privilege holidays. Shift patterns will change from time to time.

PCO Terms & Conditions

Training

All candidates are required to possess the appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to effectively and efficiently perform the duties of a PCO prior to being deployed within their station.

If successful in this competition, you will be required to complete the nine weeks induction training at the Prison Service College and undertake any other training as required to perform the duties of the post you have been assigned to. The College is based at Hydebank Wood and successful candidates will attend training sessions there as well as at Maghaberry and Magilligan Prisons. Starting time on the 1st day will be 08.30; thereafter start/finish times will be 08.00 – 16.45 but there will be occasions during job-shadowing when these will be subject to change.

The training schedule is demanding and requires full attendance. Whilst there is a set amount of time off during the programme, this is pre-allocated and therefore you should not plan to take time off in advance for holidays etc. There will also be personal study requirements outside of timetabled hours.

You will be required to achieve a high level of occupational competence during your training and you must be able to demonstrate your ability, level of knowledge and understanding through practical application. This will be assessed during the training programme through on-going observation, practical assessment and written exams and where appropriate ongoing performance review.

On completion of your initial induction training an assessment of your capability as a PCO will be carried out including the driver training provided in order to attain the required level of licence to drive the range of prison vehicles.

If the assessment confirms you have not achieved the acceptable standard; particularly in the 5 Core Skills areas which includes attaining the required standard in the use of Control & Restraint (C&R) techniques; then you may be back-squaded to re-sit these elements within the training environment and this may delay or restrict your deployment from training to the PECCS area. Thereafter, any performance management issues identified will be managed in line with the arrangements in place for Probationers.

PCO Terms & Conditions

As well as a high level of occupational competence, successful candidates will be required to conduct themselves in line with the standards required for the conduct of NIPS employees. Should you display unacceptable behaviour, or a conduct issue arises, this may result in dismissal.

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

Vetting Requirements

Those successful at interview will require clearance to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC), and an Enhanced AccessNI check.

You will be required to complete these questionnaires within one week of receiving them (or you risk your application being discontinued).

Candidates who pass their OHS medical and Enhanced Access NI stages may be made a conditional offer of appointment as a PCO. However, your appointment can only be confirmed following confirmation of you being granted CTC clearance.

For candidates who are not granted CTC level of security clearance, your appointment will be terminated.

In addition to this you must also satisfactorily complete your induction training to have your appointment confirmed.

Health Requirements

Those successful at interview for the role of a PCO in NIPS should be aware that the role is both physically and psychologically challenging, requiring a level of physical fitness that ensures duties are carried out effectively and safely, without undue stress or risk of injury. Successful candidates may be required to undergo and pass extensive medical checks (details of which can be found on pages 42 & 43) before being offered a position.

Outside employment including in the Reserve Forces & Voluntary Work

While employed by NIPS you must seek permission from NIPS to undertake Secondary Employment or to join the Emergency or Voluntary Rescue Services.

PCO Terms & Conditions

Tattoos

The NIPS recognises that having a tattoo does not necessarily prevent you from serving in or joining the NIPS. **However, certain tattoos and their visibility may not be acceptable.**

All PCOs are required to adhere with the Corporate Uniform Standard. Therefore, careful consideration will be given by the organisation to any tattoos on the head, face, neck and hands or tattoos which cannot be covered by uniform. This includes the size, nature and prominence of the tattoos in question.

- Tattoos will be unacceptable if they are contrary to any of the equality areas identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 or are in contravention of the NICS Standards of Conduct.
- Whether visible or not, tattoos will be unacceptable where they could reasonably be interpreted as offensive to members of the public, those in our care or colleagues due to their content or alignment with a particular group.
- The NIPS regularly engages with some of the most vulnerable members of society. Therefore, tattoos which conceal the identity of a PCO to the extent where it would potentially inhibit their ability as a PCO to undertake their duties or which may make a member of the public feel uncomfortable, intimidated or threatened will be unacceptable.

All tattoos must be described giving size, location and nature. A verifiable translation must accompany any tattoos containing non-English words, characters or representations. Applicants to the NIPS may be required to supply photographs of tattoos as a condition of the recruitment process.

Probation

Confirmation of your appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 1 year. If your performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory your appointment may be terminated. All appointees will be expected to demonstrate a track record of effective service within this period.



Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity & Inclusion

The NICS values and welcomes diversity and is committed to creating a truly inclusive workplace. Diversity and inclusion are reflected in and embedded across the entire range of NICS employment policies and practices.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

Applications from Roman Catholics, women, young people (people under the age of 35), people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities are particularly welcome for this post.

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

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

Disability Requirements: Reasonable Adjustment Requests

The NIPS is committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. If you have a disability you may request a reasonable adjustment to ensure you are given as much support as possible throughout the recruitment process.

It is essential that you do this in advance of starting the live test. You will need to provide relevant evidence to support your request for a reasonable adjustment, for example, an occupational psychologist report or a GP's medical statement.

Evidence to support your request should be sent to HRConnect at recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net as soon as possible following submission of your application.

Please mark your correspondence with the competition reference number IRC302475 and title it 'Supporting evidence for reasonable adjustment request'. We may contact you directly to discuss your requirements.

It is essential that special arrangements concerning any adjustment requests are made in advance of starting the live test, as retrospective arrangements cannot be made after you have started.

Diversity & Inclusion

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

As part of our commitment to the employment of disabled people, we operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The GIS does not guarantee a job. However, its objective is to ensure a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview.

Further information on the GIS can be found on the NICS Recruitment website under the section 'Information for Disabled Applicants' -

<https://irecruit-ext.hrconnect.nigov.net/pages/content.aspx?Page=Information-for-Disabled-Aplicants->

In assessing whether applicants meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria, they are required to undertake a test/assessment. All applicants must achieve the required minimum score in order to be invited to interview. Should a large number of candidates achieve the required score, we may limit the overall numbers of interviews offered and those applicants who demonstrate they best meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the job (i.e. the highest scoring) will be invited to interview.

In this scenario, we will take positive action to ensure that the number of GIS applicants invited to interview will be in proportion to those who pass the test/assessment.

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-and-benefits-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**

Selection & Assessment Process

Selection & Assessment Process

The assessment for this competition will comprise of several stages as outlined below:

1. **Online Application Form;**
2. **Formal Screening of Applications including Eligibility Sift (Driving Licence requirements);**
3. **Online Assessments;**
4. **Interview;**
5. **Merit List.**

1. Completing the Application Form

- Please read this Candidate Information Booklet (CIB) carefully before completing your application form.
- You are advised to keep a copy of the CIB for your reference throughout the recruitment process.
- The application form is designed to help you provide the necessary information to show how you meet the competition requirements.
- If you wish to apply, complete your online application at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk
- Only online applications will be accepted.

- Please ensure that you supply a valid email address when completing your application form and please advise HR Connect of any change to your contact details (particularly email address) throughout the competition process.
- All parts of the application form must be completed by the applicant before an application can be considered. **Failure to do so will result in disqualification.**
- 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 and Continue” button.
- 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 then receive an acknowledgement email. Please contact HR Connect if you do not receive an acknowledgement within 24 hours.

Selection & Assessment Process

- Once you click “submit” on your application form no further changes can be made.
- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this will result in disqualification.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your branch or your job.
- **Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted.**
- **Information in support of your application form will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.**
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline;
- **If you have asked for a reasonable adjustment, you must send your supporting evidence as soon as possible to recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net quoting IRC302475, to enable sufficient time for the adjustment to be put in place in advance of you beginning the online tests.**

2. Formal Screening of Applications

- Formal screening of applications will take place to ensure that you meet the statutory requirements for working within the NIPS (nationality, age, and that you hold the required Driving Licence(s)).
- **Only detail included in the application form will be considered. Further clarification will not be sought.**
- Applications deemed invalid at this stage will be withdrawn from the competition and these candidates will be notified accordingly.

3. Online Assessments

- During this stage of the selection process you will be required to complete an online assessment to determine your suitability for the PCO role. The online assessment consists of 2 Tests.
- The online tests can be done in your own time and at a place that suits you.
- You cannot stop an individual test once started but you can take the two tests at different times.
- You must pass both tests to be eligible to move to the next stage in the selection process.

Selection & Assessment Process

4. Interview

- Candidates who are successful in Stage 3 of the assessment process will be invited to interview in phases based on Test score order and the number of vacancies to be filled.
- **Further phases of interviews will be conducted as additional vacancies arise during the lifetime of this competition. You should therefore check your e-mails (and junk mail folder) on a regular basis in the event that you are notified of an interview.**
- **You should also ensure that you make HRConnect aware of any change to your contact details during the lifetime of this competition.**
- The interview will be conducted face to face.
- **Please be advised that while it is anticipated that interviews will be face to face for this competition, other delivery methods such as the WebEx platform may be considered in line with the relevant government health advice.**
- The interview will be based on NICS Competency Framework for the PCO grade as outlined below.
- **Candidates must present appropriate photographic identification (passport or driving licence) at the start of the interview for the interview to proceed.**

5. Merit List

- 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 and be placed on an order of merit list.
- The top scoring candidates will start the security clearance including self-disclosure and medical processes.
- As vacancies arise candidates will be offered these in merit order based on business need.

Please note that candidates can be placed at any location therefore if you are offered and do not accept a post due to its location no further offers will be made.

The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to two years.

Candidates will normally only receive one offer of appointment from this competition unless there are exceptional individual circumstances which would require a further offer to be made.

Selection & Assessment Process

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

Online Assessment Process

You should receive an invitation email (sent to the email address you provided) with a link to the online assessment site by **5pm on Monday 3rd June 2024**.

If you do not receive an email by **5pm on Monday 3rd June 2024**, please e-mail: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net inserting 'PCO 30 Hour test link not received' in the subject line.

The final deadline for completing the assessment is **5pm on Monday 10th June 2024**.

You need to complete the following steps to complete the assessment.

NOTE... all of these steps are done via the assessment site which you access using the link in your invitation email.

You should access the assessment site as soon as possible. Everything is done through the assessment site and everything is explained on the assessment site.

- 1. Check your webcam**
- 2. Verify your identity**
- 3. Study the Familiarisation and Practice material**
- 4. Take the onlinetests**

Preparing for your online assessment

You will need a computer, a working webcam and a reliable internet connection.

You will need to use an up to date **Chrome** or **Microsoft Edge** browser on your PC. If you are using a Mac, **you MUST use Chrome or Edge. Do not use Safari**
Do not use a tablet, phone or Chromebook.

Selection & Assessment Process

Step 1 - Check your webcam

NOTE – you will need a working webcam to enable the proctoring to take place.

The onus is on candidates to ensure they have access to a webcam, regrettably no alternatives are available.

Click the ‘Webcam test’ button. This will check if your webcam is working within the program. Also make sure that you are clearly visible and front on in the image and be aware that you need to remain clearly visible throughout the live assessment.

Do this well in advance of taking the live assessment and also do it immediately before taking the live assessment in case something has changed.

Step 2 - Verify your ID

IMPORTANT: DO NOT SEND ANY PHOTOS OF YOURSELF OR YOUR ID BY EMAIL. YOU MUST DO THIS THROUGH THE ASSESSMENT WEBSITE.

Before starting the ID Verification process, you should click the yellow-highlighted link at the top of the main menu page on the assessment site (‘ID Verification and Proctoring – instructions, common issues and resolutions.pdf’) and read the document.

If you encounter a problem with your ID verification or starting a live test, please consult it before emailing support.

NOTE – you cannot start the live tests unless your ID has been verified.

For this you will need to have a valid photo ID (Passports, driving licenses and electoral cards are acceptable photo IDs). Using the webcam, you will need to take a webcam image of yourself and image photo ID (e.g. passport). You will be informed by email of the verification outcome using the email you provided at application.

We will check your ID and you will receive an email from admin@assessmentintelligencemail.com informing you of the outcome (**but do check your junk/spam folder and do log on to check your ID verification status if you feel you are waiting too long**). You may be asked to re-take the photos and this is not uncommon, so please start the verification process early to ensure you have enough time to complete the process.

Selection & Assessment Process

You can check your ID Verification Status by logging in. If you have not been notified within 24 hours of submitting images AND your online verification status is still 'Submitted waiting approval', email: support@assessmentintelligence.com including your **Candidate Reference Number** and '**PCO 30 Hour 2024**' in the subject line.

We advise you to submit your webcam images as soon as possible. You should have submitted your images for identity verification by 6pm on Thursday 6th June 2024 otherwise we cannot guarantee that the identity verification process will be completed in time for you to take the live tests before the final deadline.

NOTE – if the name on your photo ID will differ significantly from your name on your application, you MUST inform HR Connect by emailing Recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net including your Candidate Reference Number and 'PCO 30 Hour 2024' in the subject line. Your email should explain the reason and include any supporting document (e.g. marriage certificate).

NOTE – you MUST complete the identity verification process online.

Under no circumstances send any images by email to the 'support@' address – unless we specifically request it.

Please note, it is your responsibility to ensure that you submit your images in good time.

Step 3 - Study the Familiarisation and Practice material for the online assessments

It is **ESSENTIAL** that you use the online Familiarisation and Practice material to check that your browser and the internet connection that you intend to take the live test on are compatible with the online tests. Note that some network firewalls may block access to the test site or prevent images from showing. If you can complete the Verification of ID process, your Webcam check is successful and the Familiarisation and Practice material works well on your IT equipment, this is a good indication that the live tests will work also.

It is **ESSENTIAL** that you access the Familiarisation and Practice materials using the computer and internet connection that you intend to take the live test on well in advance of the tests.

Selection & Assessment Process

The Familiarisation and Practice material will give you a detailed description of the tests, include full instructions for completing the tests and provide example and practice questions so that you know how to record your answers and navigate your way around the tests. You should be fully familiar with these things before taking the live tests in order to perform at your best.

Step 4. Taking the live assessments

The online assessment consists of 2 Tests.

Test 1: Verbal Comprehension- assesses your ability to organise written material in the way that makes the most sense.

Test 2: Following Procedures and Basic Calculations - assesses your ability to follow rules and apply criteria, and to do calculations correctly.

- The time allowed for these tests is;
 - **Verbal Comprehension – 25 minutes**
 - **Following Procedures and Basic Calculations – 20 minutes**

For best results we recommend completing the online assessments in a test-like environment. Any possible distractions should be turned off, for example mobile phones, TV and music. Concentration is needed throughout the assessments, so when completing each test, ensure other people are aware that they should not disturb you until you are finished. **No responsibility can be accepted for any issues arising from where you choose to sit the tests.**

Before starting a live test you should close all other browsers and browser tabs. You should not take the test on a computer that is remotely connected to a work network as the link may be unstable.

Once you log into the test platform and complete the honesty and privacy statements you will see a menu showing (i) the Webcam Test, (ii) the Identity Verification and (iii) the Familiarisation material.

The links to the Live assessments will appear on the main menu page on the assessment site once your identity has been verified by a human verifier.

Selection & Assessment Process

Immediately before you click the start button to begin a live assessment, there will be an image of you at the bottom of the page. This should be a front-on view of you as you take the assessment. You need to make sure that you are clearly seen in this image before starting the assessment and that you will remain visible in the image during the assessment.

During the assessment, you will see a small video stream from your webcam in the top left corner. Images from this stream will be monitored. We take great care with your webcam images and retain them for as short a time as possible. The image of your photo ID is deleted as soon as your identity has been verified.

Technical issues

If you lose internet connection while in the live test, you should immediately close your browser.

You will be able to continue the test without losing time and your previous answers will have been saved (except possibly on the last page you were on before losing connection).

If you experience any other issue while taking the live test, you should immediately close your browser and email: support@assessmentintelligence.com including your **Candidate Reference Number and '**PCO 30 Hour 2024**' in the subject line.**

If you do need to close your browser or your computer crashes and restarts, you must start up a fresh browser and paste in the test link again. **If your browser starts up and reloads the test again automatically, you must close it down immediately and start from a fresh browser. If your browser starts up and asks if you want to restore sessions or pages, you MUST decline.**

Final deadline

IMPORTANT – you must complete all of the live tests by 5pm on Monday 10 June 2024 and we strongly advise that you complete them well in advance of the deadline. If you leave it towards the end of the assessment window and find you have a problem (e.g., with your computer or internet) you may not have time to resolve your problem and complete the tests before the deadline. You must have submitted your images for ID Verification before **6pm on Thursday 6th June 2024** and preferably well before then.

Selection & Assessment Process

Disability Requirements: Reasonable Adjustment Requests

The NIPS is committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. If you have a disability you may request a reasonable adjustment to ensure you are given as much support as possible throughout the recruitment process.

It is essential that you do this in advance of starting the live test. You will need to provide relevant evidence to support your request for a reasonable adjustment, for example, an occupational psychologist report or a GP's medical statement.

Evidence to support your request should be sent to HRConnect at recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net as soon as possible following submission of your application.

Please mark your correspondence with the competition reference number IRC302475 and title it 'Supporting evidence for reasonable adjustment request'. We may contact you directly to discuss your requirements.

It is essential that special arrangements concerning any adjustment requests are made in advance of starting the live test, as retrospective arrangements cannot be made after you have started.

Interview Guidance

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.

NICS Competency Framework

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS competency framework at level 1.

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.

Selection & Assessment Process

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.

The NIPS has a Core Competence Framework, which is grade specific and describes what people need to do in order to be effective at work. It is not enough to just have the knowledge and skills to do our jobs.

Competence is about what people actually do, it is about how you apply or demonstrate the knowledge and skills whilst carrying out your tasks. Demonstrated competence is observable and measurable.

The competency requirements for the role of PCO are categorised under:

- 1. Seeing the Big Picture;**
- 2. Making Effective Decisions;**
- 3. Leading and Communicating; and**
- 4. Collaborating and Partnering.**

Interview questions will be designed to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in the above areas and award marks accordingly. The evidence you use may relate to your achievements and/or experiences in any kind of setting, for example, work, education or leisure and must, of course be factual.

Selection & Assessment Process

Interview Criteria

Applicants will 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. It is about focusing your contribution on the activities which will meet NIPS goals and deliver the greatest value.

Effective Behaviours

- Gather information from a range of relevant sources inside and outside their Department to inform own work.
- Understand what is required of them in their role, and how this contributes to team and departmental priorities.
- Consider how their own job links with, and impacts on, colleagues and others in partner organisations.

Marks available: 20

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. It means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions.

Effective Behaviours

- Make and record effective decisions following the appropriate decision making criteria, framework or guidance.
- Ask questions when unsure what to do.
- Undertake appropriate analysis to support decisions or recommendations.
- Investigate and respond to gaps, errors and irregularities in information.
- Speak up to clarify decisions and query those constructively.
- Think through the implications of own decisions before confirming how to approach a problem/issue.

Marks available: 20

Selection & Assessment Process

3. Leading and 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.

Effective Behaviours

- Put forward their own views in a clear and constructive manner, choosing an appropriate communication method e.g. email / telephone / face to face.
- Act in a fair and respectful way in dealing with others.
- Write clearly in plain, simple language and check work for spelling and grammar, learning from previous inaccuracies.
- Ask open questions to appreciate the point of view of others.

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 NIPS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. It requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

Effective Behaviour

- Proactively contribute to the work of the whole team.
- Get to know fellow team members/colleagues and understand their viewpoints and preferences.
- Seek help when needed in order to complete own work effectively.
- Be open to taking on different roles.
- Try to see issues from others' perspectives and check understanding.
- Listen to the views of others and show sensitivity towards others.

Marks available: 20

Candidates will be required to achieve an overall score of 40/80 in order to pass the interview.

Selection & Assessment Process

Interviews Dates & Availability

It is intended that the first phase of face to face interviews for this post will take place week commencing 1 July 2024.

Please note that further phases of interviews will be conducted at a later date as vacancies arise. If you are therefore not called for interview during the first phase you may be called during subsequent phases (which may take place up to 18 months following advertisement) and should therefore check your e-mails on a regular basis in the event that you are notified of an interview. You should also ensure that you make HRConnect aware of any change to your contact details during the lifetime of this competition.

Reschedule requests will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

If having received your invitation, you decide to withdraw from the competition, please inform HRConnect as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours of receiving your invitation. This time frame will assist us in the timely rescheduling of panels.



General Information

General Information

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.

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 fulfil 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.

General Information

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.

Changes in personal circumstances

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances such as new contact details. It is important that HRConnect have up to date contact details for each applicant.

Communication between HRConnect and you

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

Transgender Requirements

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

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.

General Information

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

Eligibility and Nationality Vetting Requirements

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

You should ensure that the required documents are readily available. Failure to provide the appropriate documentation when requested will result in your application being rejected.

National of a Commonwealth country; or

(iii) National of the Republic of Ireland; or

(iv) EEA nationals with settled 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 EEA & Turkish nationals

For candidates applying under categories iv – vii you are required to provide the following information in the Right to Work and Nationality Requirements response box in Part 1 of your application form. Failure to provide the requested information WILL result in your application being rejected.

Category iv – Please provide your ‘Share code’ in the ‘Share code’ field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your [‘share code’](#) here

Category v - Please provide your ‘Share code’ in the ‘Share code’ field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your [‘share code’](#) here. You are also required to provide your payroll number in the nationality response box to demonstrate that you are working in the Northern Ireland Civil Service;

General Information

Category vi - Please provide your 'share code' in the '[share code](#)' field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your 'share code' here. Alternatively please provide confirmation in the nationality response box that you hold indefinite or limited leave to remain in the UK and that this was granted prior to 31st December 2020.

Category vii - Please provide your 'share code' in the 'Share code' field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your '[share code](#)' here. In addition, please provide evidence in the nationality response box to support your application for applying as a family member of a relevant EEA and Turkish nation. Further documentary evidence may be request from HRConnect to support this;

'Family member of the relevant EEA or Turkish nationals' means:

- (i) That national's spouse*; or
- (ii) A direct descendant (child, grandchild etc.) of that national or his/her spouse who is under 21 years of age or is their dependent; or
- (iii) A dependent relative in the ascending line (parent, grandparent etc.) of the EEA national or his/her spouse.

*Note: 'Spouse' does not include a party to a marriage of convenience and in the case of EEA national vocational students family members are restricted to spouses and dependent children only.

Where a candidate has a right to work status which has a time limitation, ongoing checks will be in place to ensure the right to work is maintained.

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

Clearance Requirements

1. Counter Terrorism Check (CTC)

For PCO posts in NIPS, the level of vetting is CTC. To facilitate this 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;
- d) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

General Information

Please note that this role requires CTC clearance, which would normally require 3 years' UK residency in the past 3. This is not an absolute requirement but supplementary checks may be required where individuals have not lived in the UK for the required period. This may mean that your security clearance (and therefore your appointment) will take longer or, in some cases, not be possible.

We will carry out a Criminal Record Check on all candidates through AccessNI.

The category of AccessNI check required for these posts is an Enhanced Disclosure.

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: <http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>. Those candidates who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview 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.

The AccessNI code of practice can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni.

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

The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exception) Order (NI) 1979 applies to the Northern Ireland Prison Service. You should therefore not withhold information about previous conviction, caution or fixed penalty ticket on the grounds that it is for other purposes spent under the Order. You should therefore declare ALL previous convictions, whether spent or otherwise.

Please note that a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to obtaining a position.

General Information

Health Requirements

The role of a PCO in NIPS is both physically and psychologically challenging, requiring a level of mental and physical capacity that ensures duties are carried out effectively and safely, without undue stress or risk of injury.

Activities that place a high demand on physical fitness are generally infrequent but when required they are often critical to success. The failure of a PCO to perform a given duty because of a lack of mental and/or physical capacity could have serious, even fatal consequences for the officer, his or her colleagues, prisoners and the public. Certain conditions may be incompatible with work within NIPS for example those causing sudden and unexpected loss of consciousness or dizziness or significant restriction of physical fitness or mobility. Candidates should note that a history of a significant medical condition which interferes with the functional ability to undertake the duties of the post or has the potential to put the candidate or anyone else at significant risk may be a cause for rejection but that cases will be assessed individually in compliance with relevant disability legislation.

All candidates must be physically and psychologically capable of undertaking the work of a PCO. Fitness testing may be carried out by NIPS after recruitment on a periodic/regular and ongoing basis.

Please note that the candidate is responsible for any costs incurred obtaining any medical reports or contact lenses if required (detailed below). Failure to enclose the necessary reports will result in applications being returned.

The following health standards must be met by all candidates in order for them to be deemed fit to work as a PCO:

PCOs need to be physically fit and have a standard of health such that neither their safety, the safety of their colleagues nor the safety of prisoners should be compromised.

Candidates should have a body mass index (BMI) within the range of 19-30. A BMI outside the 19-30 range may not in itself be a bar to employment unless there is an impairment of functional capacity.

Blood pressure must be within acceptable limits.

General Information

Where a candidate indicates on their health declaration that they suffer from an ongoing medical condition they are required to include with their health declaration a medical report from their GP/Consultant indicating the nature of the condition and any likely impact on functional ability to work as a PCO.

Insulin dependent diabetics may be accepted if their GP/Specialist confirms that they can demonstrate long-term stability of their diabetic control without significant hypoglycaemic episodes. An individual with a history of significant hypoglycaemic episodes may be rejected. Candidates must ask their GP/Specialist to complete a diabetic form and return this with their health declaration.

Tuberculosis (TB) immunity and Hepatitis B (HEP B) will be assessed as part of the pre-employment assessment, candidates must submit a completed TB and HEP B immunity letter with their health declaration, candidates must also comply with any additional tests required to establish TB and HEP B immunity.

Eyesight requirements:-

- (i) No corrective lenses required; uncorrected minimum 6/12 - 6/12
- (ii) Corrective spectacles worn; uncorrected minimum 6/24 - 6/24 corrected minimum 6/12 - 6/12
- (iii) Contact lenses worn; corrected minimum 6/12 - 6/12

If contact lenses are needed to meet the visual acuity standard, a certificate from the applicant's Optometrist / Ophthalmic medical practitioner will be required. The certificate should indicate that the lenses are appropriate, well tolerated, without adverse effect and can be worn for at least 14 hours continuously per day.

The uncorrected visual acuity (i.e. without contact lenses) must also be stated. They should also have alternative corrective lenses in the form of glasses, in the event of inability for any reason to wear contact lenses at work

- Candidates should have a normal test of colour vision.
- If you have any doubt that your eyesight does not meet the relevant standard, you are advised to consult a qualified optician before completing the application form.

Contact Details

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

E: recruitment@hrconnect.ni.gov.net

T: 0800 1 300 330

Address:

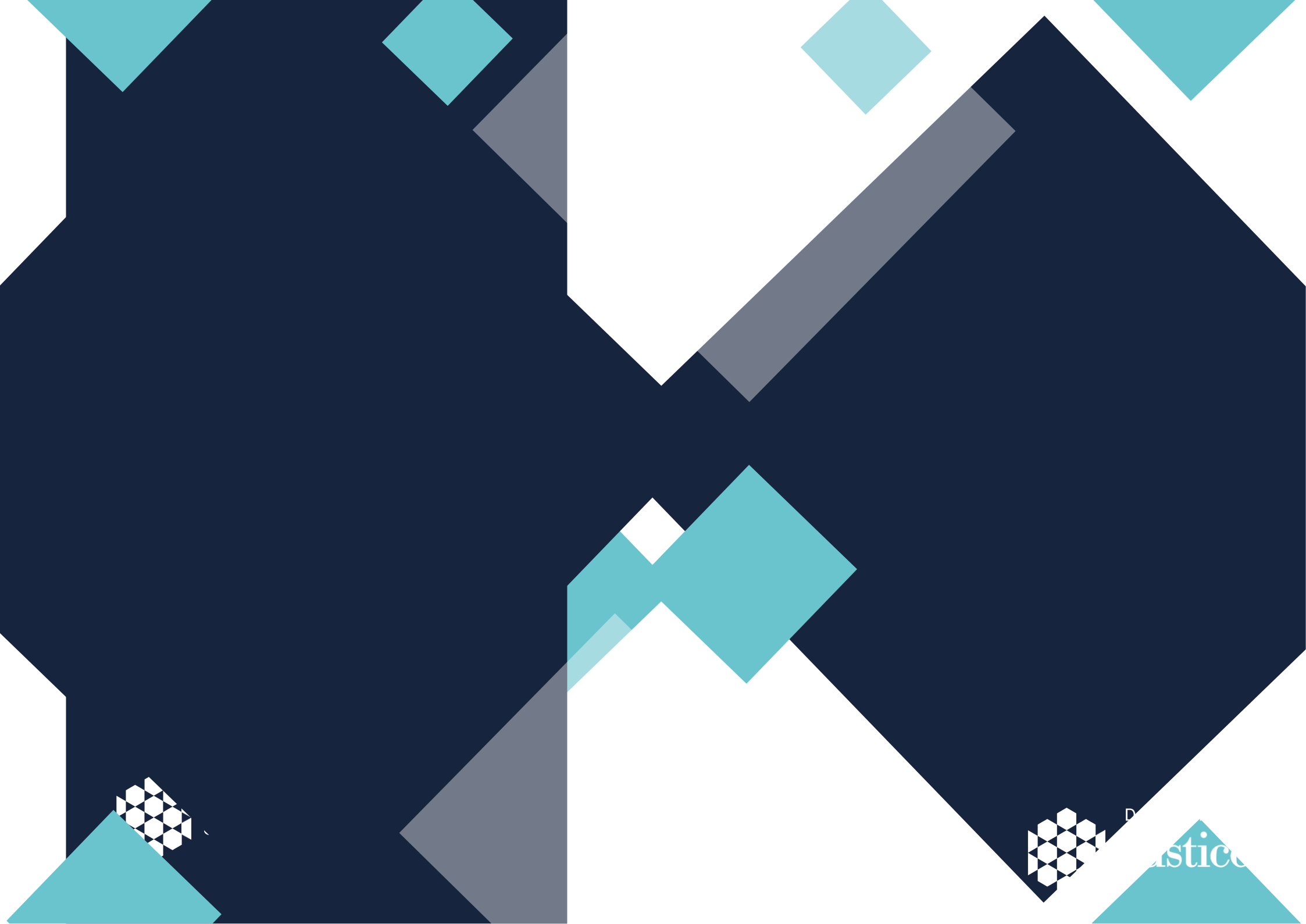
HR Connect
PO Box 1089
Beacon House
27 Clarendon Road
Belfast
BT1 9EX

THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF THE CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

KEY DATES

Closing date for applications	12 noon on 17 May 2024
Live test available	5pm on 3 June 2024
Closing date for ID verification	6pm on 6 June 2024
Final deadline for completion of live test	5pm on 10 June 2024





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