

Senior Civil Service Departmental Solicitor

Department of Finance

Salary: £146,469 - £163,267 per annum.
Plus an employer pension contribution of 34.2%.

IRC313609

Completed application forms must be returned to HRConnect
no later than **12 noon (UK time) on Friday 31st October 2025.**

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

Candidate Information Booklet



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Foreword from the Head of Civil Service

Thank you for your interest in the post of Departmental Solicitor, a key leadership role within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

The Departmental Solicitor leads the legal profession within the NICS and heads the Government Legal Service NI. It is one of the most senior and influential roles in the public sector in Northern Ireland, offering a unique opportunity to lead legal services at the heart of government, collaborating with a focus on outcomes and delivering for all.

The Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) plays a critical role in ensuring that government departments operate within the rule of law, that policy decisions are supported by rigorous legal analysis and that public confidence in our institutions is upheld.

The Departmental Solicitor provides authoritative legal advice to Ministers and senior officials, supports the delivery of public services through sound legal frameworks and manages complex litigation and legislative processes.

This is a role which demands not only outstanding legal knowledge, particularly in public and constitutional law, but also strong leadership, sound judgement and a deep understanding of the workings of government. As head of DSO you will oversee a large and talented team of legal professionals, fostering excellence, integrity and collaboration across the NI Civil Service.

If you are an experienced legal leader with a passion for public service and a commitment to upholding the highest standards of legal practice, then I strongly encourage you to consider this exceptional opportunity.

Jayne Brady

HEAD OF CIVIL SERVICE



OUR VISION



The NICS People Strategy 2025-2030 aligns with the Programme for Government, “**Doing what Matters Most**” with a clear focus which centres on collaborative decision-making and outcomes-based approaches.

OUR VISION

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) supports the Assembly, the Executive and the institutions of government. We work to develop and implement government policies and help deliver services to the public.

The NICS People Strategy 2025-2030 sets a clear direction and focus for the Civil Service to meet both current and future challenges, building on our strengths and signalling our ambition and aspiration for colleagues and the Civil Service.

The People Strategy aligns with the Programme for Government, “Doing what Matters Most” with a clear focus which centres on collaborative decision-making and outcomes-based approaches.

We deliver essential services to the public, provide analysis and advice, develop political ideas into effective policies, and support the functioning of our political institutions.

We bring expertise, knowledge and continuity to the functioning of government, and we are acutely aware society, technology, the economy and the public’s expectations are constantly changing.

We must be proactive in addressing potential skills shortages and ensuring we are an attractive employer by offering appropriate reward and investing in employee development to enhance skills and capabilities.

This presents both challenges and opportunities. Success will depend on our ability to provide a collaborative and skilled civil service focused on outcomes and delivering for all.

We will be better placed to do this through demonstrating, every day, our core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality in everything that we do.



OUR VISION

Our People Priorities are focused on three key areas:



Skills and Capacity

Ensuring that our workforce is equipped with the skills and capabilities to meet current and future demands.



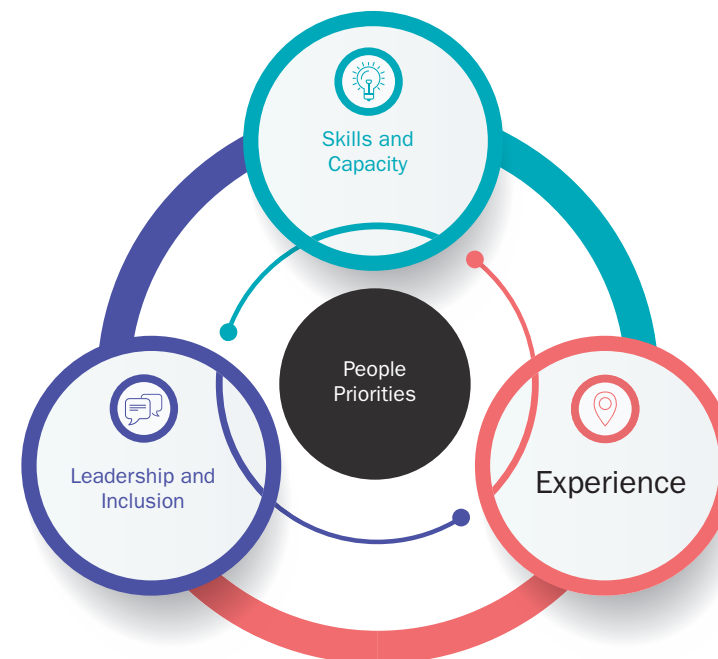
Experience and Environment

Creating a positive and supportive work environment that enhances the overall experience of the workforce.



Leadership and Inclusion

Fostering a culture of strong leadership, inclusivity and diversity to drive better outcomes for our workforce and the public we serve.



Focusing on these priorities and related actions over the next five years will enable us to support Ministers – and the Executive as a whole – in developing and implementing their policies, and in delivering public services. Everyone, across Civil Service departments, has a role to play in implementing the People Strategy and making meaningful changes for the better. Read the [NICS People Strategy 2025-30](#).



About the NICS

As one of NI's largest employers, we employ over 24,000 staff across a wide range of disciplines and aspects of government that touch on everyone's day to day lives, managing a total annual budget in the region of £20 billion.

We have nine departments (which range from around 300 to over 7000 staff in post) which support the NI Executive and Ministers by developing and implementing government policies and legislation and delivering key public services in areas such as health, social development, justice, education, regeneration, environment, culture, agriculture, economic development, employment and transport. In addition, the Public Prosecution Service is staffed by civil servants and is a non-Ministerial department.

The NICS Board provides collective leadership and advice in support of the Executive as a whole, through the Head of the Civil Service, including on the creation of the Programme for Government and the creation and delivery of the organisation's transformation and development programme. It is a forum for discussion and agreement on a collective approach to cross departmental and system-wide operational or governance issues.

More information can be found on the website <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk>

For further information about the NICS, including our values, see the [NICS Code of Ethics](#).



About the Departmental Solicitor's Office

The Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) is a business area within the Department of Finance that serves the work of government through the provision of high-quality, cost-effective legal advice and services.

The DSO assists and supports the Executive and Departments in the performance of their functions to best advantage, advising Departments across a wide range of serious and complex issues, assisting the development of departmental policies and legislation, human-rights proofing, and advising on substantial commercial activities, including some of the biggest property developments in Northern Ireland. It also defends Departments' interests in a wide range of litigation including judicial review and, where appropriate, initiates cases in the courts on their behalf. DSO also presently has policy responsibility for civil law reform.

It has six legal Divisions which are together supported by a Corporate Services Division:

- Commercial and Property Division
- 2 Litigation Divisions 4 Advisory Divisions,
- each focused on providing advice to particular policy "clients".

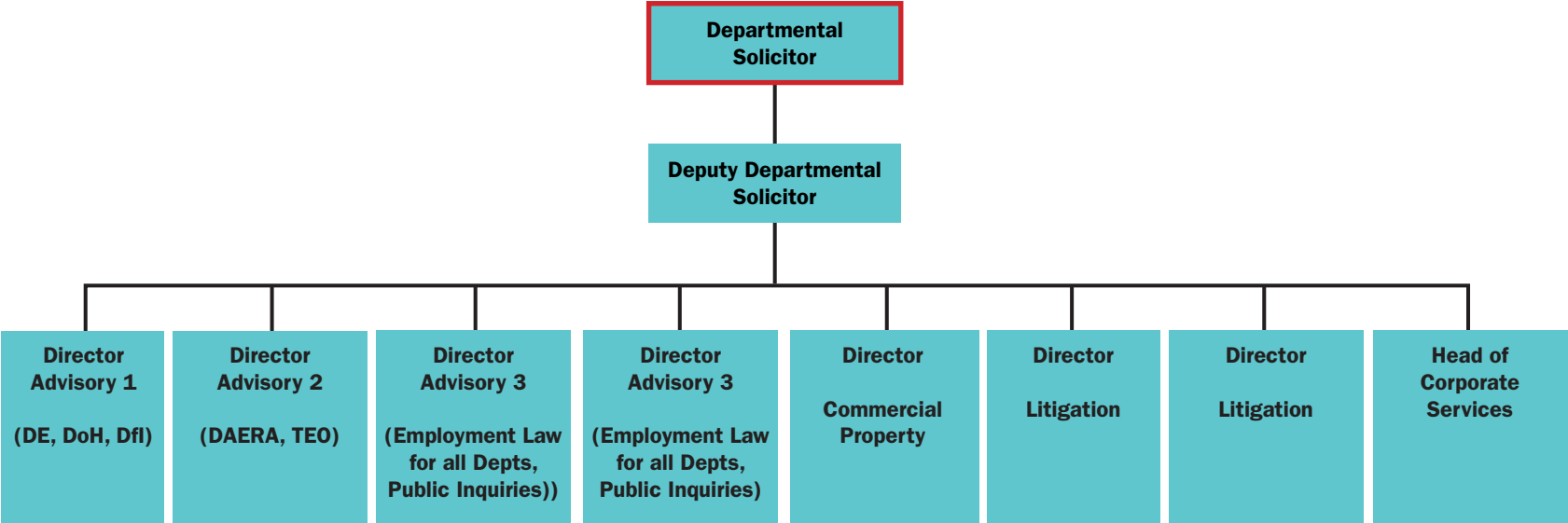
DSO headquarters are currently located in Lanyon Plaza, Belfast. Staff are also located in Orchard House, Derry / Londonderry; and outposted to other departmental locations. There are currently 164 staff in DSO, of whom 132 are legal staff and it has a budget of £12.6m.

Although the Departmental Solicitor reports to the Head of the Civil Service (HOCS) and not the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance (DOF), DSO is an integral business area within DoF and contributes to the delivery of legal services alongside DOF's provision of other professional and corporate services to the NI Departments.

The Departmental Solicitor is a member of the DOF Board and works alongside the Permanent Secretary to manage the provision of the legal services within that wider framework, whilst providing the professional leadership for legal services in DSO and beyond.



DSO Senior Management Structure



BACKGROUND

About the Government Legal Service NI (GLSNI) and the Legal Profession in the NI Civil Service

The Departmental Solicitor is head of the legal profession in the NICS and head of the Government Legal Service for Northern Ireland (GLSNI). The seniority of the post, and the contribution to the work of government as a whole is reflected in the Departmental Solicitor's membership of the NICS Board.

GLSNI brings together a community of lawyers providing legal services in civil matters for the Northern Ireland Departments, the departments of the UK Government and a number of bodies, public office holders and judicial office holders in civil matters in NI.

The principal function of this community of lawyers is to provide a forum and mechanism for co-ordination of legal services to the offices which are members of the GLSNI. This covers activities such as recruitment, learning and development, knowledge management, improvement work and social events.

The organisations currently participating in GLSNI include the Departmental Solicitor's Office, Crown Solicitors Office and National Crime Agency.



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES



JOB DESCRIPTION

The main duties of the Departmental Solicitor / Head of Government Legal Services are:

- Protecting the rule of law through the leadership, management and development of staff of the DSO who provide legal services and advice to the Northern Ireland Departments and their agencies (including litigation and tribunal work; commercial law and procurement advice; drafting subordinate legislation; and legislative competence and devolution matters, including the European Convention on Human Rights).
- Development of the DSO as a well-motivated, authoritative and ambitious organisation with constructive relationships with key delivery partners, to secure reliable, cost-effective and sustainable services to clients.
- Personally providing legal advice at the highest level on complex and often politically sensitive issues in relation to the functions, policies and activities of the Northern Ireland Executive, and Northern Ireland Departments.
- Direction and leadership of the GLSNI, communicating a strong and visible commitment to the core values of the legal profession as well as of the Civil Service, and supporting the delivery of reliable, cost-effective and sustainable legal services across the government sector.
- Leadership of the legal profession within the NI Civil Service, as the Head of Profession, in particular in relation to standards and the professional development of the lawyers working in the NICS.
- Leadership through change in the DSO and wider GLSNI, enabling organisations to meet new challenges and create new opportunities in the provision of services.
- Development of constructive working relationships with key stakeholders including Ministers, the office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, senior managers in the Departments, heads of other government-sector legal offices with responsibilities in Northern Ireland, and lawyers representing outside interests and relevant professional bodies.
- Securing and controlling the effective use of resources, within a robust Corporate Governance framework.
- Making practical and outcomes-focused contributions to the leadership and management of the Department of Finance, including through membership of the Departmental Board, and to the work of government as a whole, including through membership of the Permanent Secretaries' group and the NICS Board.

This 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.

ABOUT THE ROLE

There is one full time vacancy within the Departmental Solicitor's Office. This is a full-time post and permanent appointment to the Northern Ireland Senior Civil Service (SCS), the NICS's top leadership and management resource.

SALARY

The salary for the post (full-time) is within the range £146,469 - £163,267 per annum.

The successful candidate can expect to be placed at the minimum point of the pay scale, although a higher starting salary within the range may be available if they have exceptionally relevant skills/experience. Where a successful candidate is an existing NI civil servant, starting pay on promotion/transfer to a new substantive grade will apply.

To comply with the disclosure requirements in the Department's Annual Accounts, we will disclose details of the total remuneration, including any taxable benefits in kind and pension benefits for this post in our annual accounts.

Further information may be disclosed in line with any future disclosure requirements relating to the senior management of departments. It is a condition attaching to the appointment to any Senior Civil Service post in Northern Ireland that appointees agree to these disclosure requirements.

LOCATION

DSO is housed in **Lanyon Plaza, Belfast**. DSO accommodates a hybrid style of working which blends working at home with working in the office, in accordance with DoF and NICS employment policies.

For the senior leadership post of Departmental Solicitor, whilst some home working can be supported, this will be subject to a formal work-style agreement with the Head of the Civil Service (as line manager). The agreement would reflect the expectation that the majority of working hours would be spent in the office.

Where a successful candidate is to relocate home to take up appointment, the Department will consider the reimbursement of reasonable expenses (in part or full) incurred in relocating.

VETTING AND SECURITY

An appointment will be dependent on the individual satisfying the vetting requirements for these posts.

The level of vetting required for this post is **Basic AccessNI** and **Security Check (SC)**.

Successful candidates will only receive an application to complete the SC check once the Basic AccessNI check has been successfully completed.



ABOUT THE ROLE



HOURS OF WORK

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 37 hours excluding meal breaks Monday – Friday.

In common with all SCS appointments, the post-holder will be required to work outside their normal conditioned hours, where necessary, to fulfil the demands of the post.

HOLIDAYS

In addition to public and privilege holidays, currently 12 days, the annual leave allowance will be 30 days.

SECONDMENT

Consideration will be given to filling the post by secondment of a successful candidate from the candidate's current employer. Secondment means a voluntary transfer from a permanent employer for a fixed period which does not sever the employment relationship of the person seconded with the permanent employer.

The duration will be agreed by all parties prior to the start of any secondment. A secondment would be on the candidate's current terms and conditions of service.

It is advisable that candidates interested in a secondment option make their employers aware that, under NICS secondment arrangements, the successful candidate will remain an employee of their current employer.

The necessary administration arrangements will be agreed with the Department and the employer before a secondment arrangement commences.

TRAVEL

Access to a form of transport will be required to fulfil the responsibilities of this post. Travel within Northern Ireland or elsewhere within the UK and Ireland may be required. This could include overnight stays.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is a basic requirement of all Civil Servants that their private activities should not bring them into 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.

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.

As such, to protect employees and the department from public criticism, it will be mandatory for the successful candidate to complete a Conflict of Interest declaration on appointment.

[Dear Accounting Officer letters \(DAOs\) 2021 | Department of Finance \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

ABOUT THE ROLE



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.

Existing NICS staff who have successfully completed a probationary period will not be required to serve a further probationary period.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For an informal and confidential discussion about this role, please contact Hugh Widdis (legal aspects) and / or Neil Gibson (shared service aspects) by email.

Hugh.Widdis@justice-ni.gov.uk

Neil.Gibson@finance-ni.gov.uk

If you require any documentation in an alternative format, you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

For this role you will need to be able to show, through your application and at interview, that you have a breadth and depth of experience and personal qualities for this post, as well as the leadership skills to succeed at this level in the Senior Civil Service.

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications, be able to demonstrate that they:

1. Are qualified as a solicitor or barrister entitled to practice in the UK with significant* postqualification professional experience in civil law and practice, with a particular emphasis on public and administrative law.

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

AND

2. Have operated successfully at a senior leadership level*** in a complex public and/or private sector organisation****, with the ability to translate broad strategic goals into clear outcomes and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

AND

3. Have a track record of finding solutions to complex and sensitive issues and inspiring the confidence of clients through the provision of personal legal advice and counsel.

AND

4. Have a track record of working collaboratively, demonstrating high-level communication and engagement skills and political astuteness. Demonstrate building trusted and influential relationships with a range of partners and stakeholders that generate confidence and respect.

***Significant** is defined as applying to the depth and breadth of legal work and handling complex and high-stakes legal matters beyond routine legal tasks, showing strategic thinking, leadership, and influence in legal decision-making.

****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 and demonstrate equivalence so that a well informed decision can be made.

*****Senior leadership level** is defined as being accountable for the output and performance of a team or teams of staff and being part of a Senior Management Team or Management Board.

******Complex public/private sector organisation** is defined as one where scale, diversity of operations, governance, and accountability combine to create a challenging environment for leadership and decision-making.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA



SHORTLISTING

Applicants should be aware that, after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the panel will carry out an objective evaluation of the information provided by candidates in response to **eligibility criterion 2**.

This will be completed on a scored basis and only the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview. The panel will complete this assessment against the information provided by applicants in response to this eligibility criterion only.

GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME

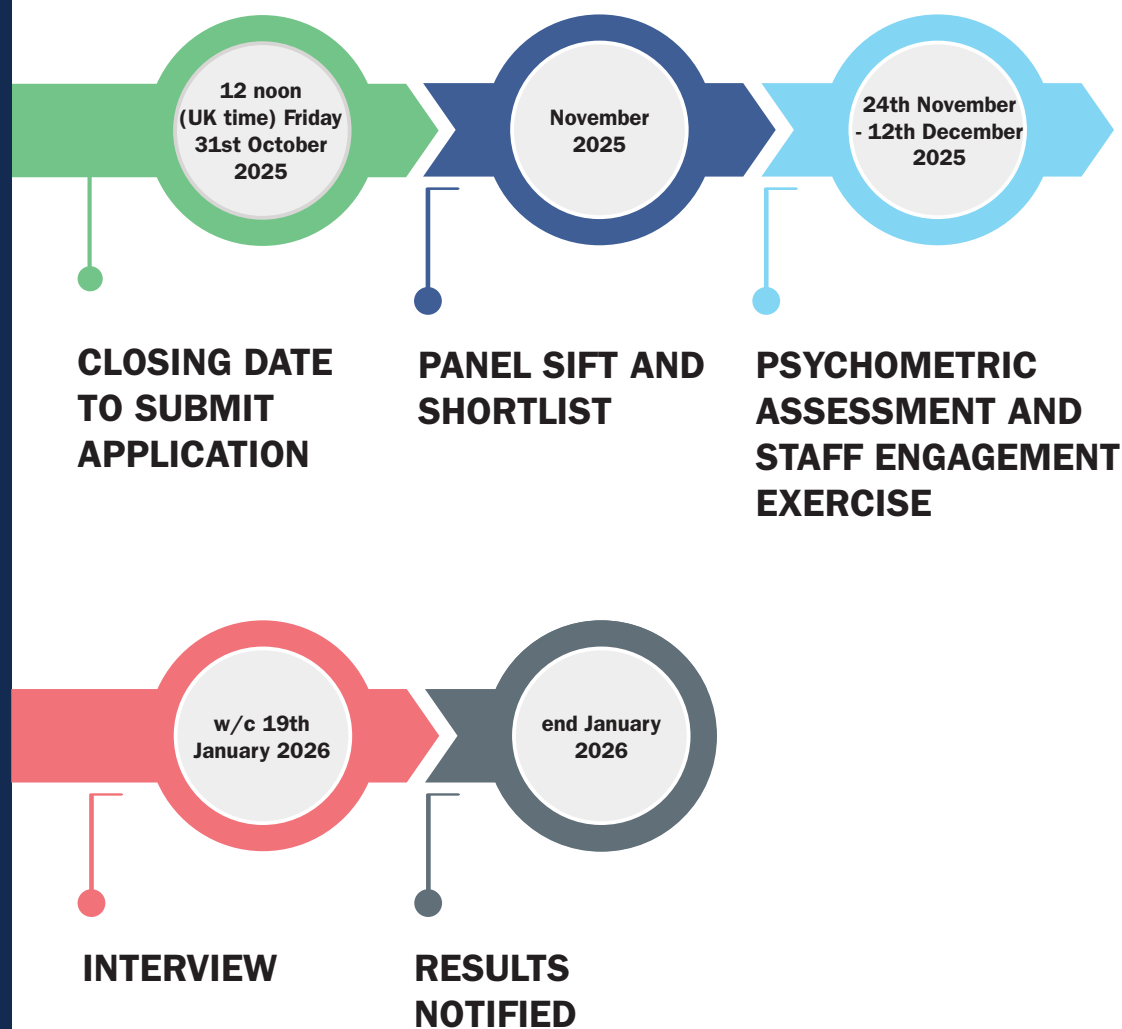
As part of our commitment to the employment of disabled people, we operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The GIS does not guarantee a job. However, its objective is to ensure a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. If you wish to apply under the GIS, you must declare this on your application form. Shortlisting criteria will not apply to GIS applicants.

If you do not wish to apply under the GIS, but do require us to make reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process, you should provide details on your application form. We will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments for any stage of this recruitment process. Details of any disability are only used for these purposes and do not form any part of the selection process.

If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability, are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be asked to outline any reasonable 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.



INDICATIVE TIMELINE



Please note that these are indicative dates only and may be subject to change.

SELECTION PROCESS



Throughout the process, candidates will be tested against the skills and experience set out under the Person Specification and will be expected to demonstrate the leadership behaviours of the NICS competency framework: **Setting Direction, Engaging People and Delivering Results.**

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS Competency Framework at Level 6.

Information on the NICS leadership behaviours and competences (skills, knowledge and behaviours) can be found at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk

These indicators are not designed to be comprehensive but rather to give an understanding of what is expected of our leaders.

ONLINE APPLICATION

Please register to vacancy **IRC313609** and complete an online application form via the NICS recruitment website www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk

The closing date for receipt of completed application forms is **12 noon (UK time) on Friday 31st October 2025**. Closing date to be added when confirmed.

Your application will include a section on career history and a supporting statement (maximum 1,600 words) explaining how you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience meet the eligibility criteria for the role.

VALIDITY CHECK OF APPLICATIONS

After the closing date, a check will be undertaken to ensure that all applications are valid. These checks will ensure that applicants meet the age and nationality requirements for the role. Applications deemed invalid at this stage will be withdrawn from the competition.

ELIGIBILITY SIFT

Following the validity check the panel will carry out an eligibility sift of all applications received by the closing date to ensure that only candidates meeting the criteria progress to the next stage of the process.

Only the employment history and supporting statement will be made available to the selection panel. Applicants should ensure that they provide the necessary relevant evidence against each specific criterion within the personal statement.

ASSESSMENT

Candidates who are shortlisted for interview will be asked to complete a psychometric questionnaire and interview with an independent Occupational Psychologist and take part in a Staff Engagement exercise.

These assessments will not result in a pass or fail decision. Rather, they are designed to support the panel's decision making and highlight areas for the panel to explore further at interview.

Full details will be provided in the invitation letter.

SELECTION PROCESS



PRESENTATION AND INTERVIEW

Following the eligibility sift and assessment, candidates will be invited to an interview with the selection panel which will include a presentation.

Candidates will be required to make a presentation relevant to the responsibilities of the post lasting no more than 7 minutes. The panel will ask follow-up questions after the presentation.

Candidates will be advised of the presentation topic in the letter inviting them to interview and should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview as no preparation time will be provided on the day of the interview.

Candidates may bring prompt cards to deliver the presentation. No other visual aids or notes are permitted and notes must not be used once the presentation has concluded.

The interview will follow the presentation.

During the presentation and interview, the panel will assess candidates against the skills and experience set out in the Person Specification and candidates will be expected to demonstrate the leadership behaviours set out at Level 6 in the [NICS Competency Framework](#):

- **Strategic Cluster - Setting Direction**
- **People Cluster - Engaging People**
- **Performance Cluster - Delivering Results**

Candidates need to reach the minimum standard across all competences in the assessment process to achieve the pass mark.

The panel will score each candidate and list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring candidate ranked first.

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in person, in Belfast.

SELECTION PANEL

Deirdre Toner

Civil Service Commissioner (Chair)

Jayne Brady

Head of the NI Civil Service

Ruaraidh Macniven

Director of Legal Services and Solicitor to the Scottish Government

SELECTION PROCESS



THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

In accordance with 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

MERIT LIST

A merit list will be compiled and further appointments may be made from this competition should this position become vacant within the lifetime of the competition, which is one year.

RESULTS

These will be issued by our shared service provider, HRConnect, after approvals from the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners.

FEEDBACK

We are 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. All requests for feedback are welcome.

Feedback at sift/shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criterion.

Following the conclusion of the recruitment process, each candidate taking part in the assessment and interview stages of the competition will be offered the opportunity of a 1-2-1 feedback session.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES 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 [Department of Finance website](#).

Applications from Protestants, males, young people (people under the age of 35), people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities are particularly welcomed for this post.

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

What can we offer you?

We want you to build a really successful career within your allocated department and the wider NICS. In addition to your salary, as a Civil Service employee you'll be entitled to a large range of benefits including:

- ✓ The opportunity as a Senior Civil Servant to play a key leadership role inspiring, influencing and shaping future government services and policy in NI.
- ✓ A wide ranging and varied career. The NICS is committed to career development and civil servants are encouraged and supported in proactively managing their career. Personal Development Plans identify learning and development needs with a view to enhancing skills and capabilities.
- ✓ The option to request to join us on secondment terms. "Secondment" means a voluntary transfer from a permanent employer for a fixed period, which does not sever the employment relationship of the person seconded with the permanent employer. A secondment would be on your current employer's terms and conditions of service and you would remain an employee of your current employer.
- ✓ New ways of working – we provide flexible ways of working including a blend of home and office working, whilst enabling the business to operate at maximum efficiency.
- ✓ 30 days' annual leave on entry. This is in addition to 12 public and privilege holidays.
- ✓ Paid maternity and paternity leave which is notably more than the statutory minimum offered by many other employers.
- ✓ Occupational sick pay.



Pension Package

An attractive **pension package** providing a range of valuable benefits, providing peace of mind when it comes to planning for future retirement.



Great member pension

- ✓ Main Defined Benefit Pension Scheme
- ✓ Providing a secure pension payable for life with no investment uncertainty
- ✓ Choice of a tax free lump sum
- ✓ Generous build rate of 2.32% of your earnings as a pension each year
- ✓ Choice of entering a Defined Contribution Scheme



What pension could you get?

- ✓ For example if you earned £146,469 per year and remained in the Defined Benefit Scheme
- ✓ After 10 years you could have a pension of £33,980 pa



Employer contributions

- ✓ Employer Contribution towards the main Defined Benefit pension scheme is 34.25% of your pay
- ✓ Employer Contribution towards the Defined Contribution Scheme is between 8% - 14.75% depending on age



Main Scheme Death benefits

- ✓ Able to nominate anyone (including charities) for a Tax free lump sum in the event of your death
- ✓ Lump Sum of up to two times your pay
- ✓ Main Scheme provides a Pension for your spouse/partner of around 37.5% of your pension as well as pension for eligible children

BENEFITS

[Annual Leave](#)

[Hybrid Working](#)

[Pensions](#)

[Personal Development and Training](#)

[Support Services for Civil Servants](#)

[Career Development](#)



GENERAL INFORMATION

[Diversity and Inclusion](#)

[Information for Disabled Applicants](#)

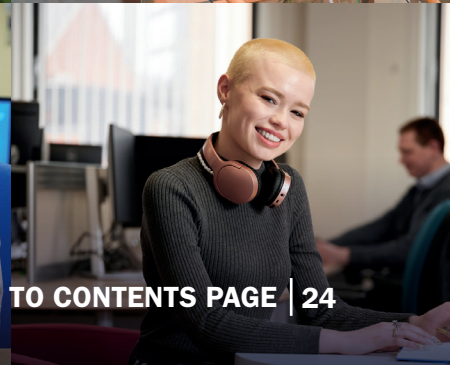
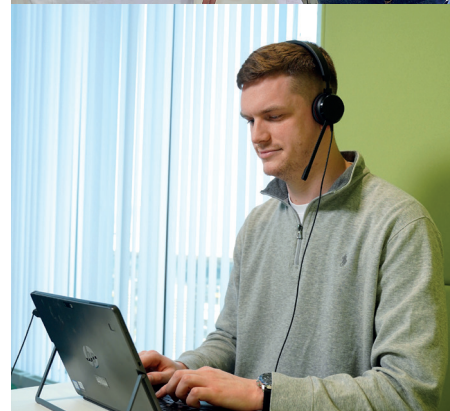
[Nationality Guidance](#)

[Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual](#)

[NICS Competency Framework](#)

[Security Vetting](#)

[NICS Recruitment Privacy Notice](#)



**Thank you for
your interest
in this role**

This is a fantastic opportunity to step into a dynamic and impactful leadership role to make a significant difference to citizens' lives and the quality of public services in Northern Ireland.