

# Recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Annual Report 2017





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# ONE INTRODUCTION

## 1.1

This report is published by NICS HR of the Department of Finance (DOF) on behalf of all Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments and Agencies and details recruitment activity across NICS Departments and Agencies during the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.

## 1.2

Recruitment to the NICS is regulated by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland who are responsible for ensuring appointments to the NICS are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. Civil Service Commissioners are independent of Government and the NICS. This report is published in compliance with the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999. Article 4(5) of the Order provides that information relating to recruitment must be published in accordance with any requirement which the Commissioners may specify in a recruitment code.

## 1.3

NICS HR is committed to the principle of selection for appointment on merit, in fair and open competition and takes proactive measures to ensure we remain an employer of choice, providing equality of opportunity to all. Recruitment, selection and appointment of staff are managed in line with best practice set out in the Codes of Practice of the Equality Commission and in accordance with the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code.

## 1.4

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) produce and publish all NICS recruitment statistics at the behest of NICS HR. The NISRA report provides analysis of applicants across various equality categories, at key stages in the recruitment and selection process and compares the profile of candidates with what might have been expected if all the groups within each equality category had been equal in terms of merit. Data in this report is updated on a rolling basis to provide further information on appointments made from competitions in previous reporting periods. A list of all the recruitment competitions which closed for applications during the reporting period can be found at Appendix 1 of this report. NISRA's analysis of NICS recruitment competitions 1 January 2017 - 31 December 2017 is published on NISRA's website at;

[www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/analysis-nics-recruitment-competitions-2017](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/analysis-nics-recruitment-competitions-2017)



# TWO ↘ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 2.1

2017 brought significant changes to the management of recruitment competitions and appointments to the NICS. The formation of NICSHR has provided the opportunity to streamline processes and further work is ongoing to develop and refine policy and procedures to ensure delivery of an efficient, timely resourcing service to meet the needs of our customers. The Merit Principle is core to this work and this report highlights full compliance with NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures and the NI Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code. An evidence based assurance framework enables the NICS to confidently provide an assurance to our regulators, customers and the public we serve.

## 2.2

Following the lifting of the embargo in April 2016, the level of recruitment activity has continued to rise with 88 competitions openly advertised in 2017. Recruitment activity has not been at this level since 2013. Increased recruitment affords an opportunity to improve the diversity of the NICS workforce whilst also ensuring the best possible person is appointed to the post. The wide and varied careers available in the NICS is evident in the diverse range of competitions advertised this year across different grades and disciplines.

NICS competitions continue to attract high levels of applications however NICSHR recognises there is more work to be done to achieve a NICS workforce that reflects the society we serve and to target areas of underrepresentation. A key success identified in this report is the improvement in number of female appointments to the Senior Civil Service (SCS).

For the 2017 reporting year, 9 SCS competitions were advertised with 6 appointments made from these competitions by 1 February 2018. Equal numbers of male and female candidates were appointed at this stage. Comparing to the same period last year, 5 appointments to the SCS had been made from 11 competitions and all of the appointments were male. The NICS are on track for achieving the gender target of 45% female representation in the SCS by 2020.

## 2.3

Finally NICSHR recognises the benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce and the importance of recruitment in achieving this. This report summarises key developments in this area and reports on ongoing initiatives within NICSHR and the wider NICS. Embedding diversity and inclusion in all that we do will remain a key focus moving forward.



# THREE ↘ KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO SERVICES IN 2017





## NICSHR

### 3.1

NICSHR was established in April 2017 to deliver a cohesive, strategic and customer-focused HR service for the NICS. It is structured across six functional areas and includes a HR Business Partner service to provide advice and support on strategic HR issues to leadership teams in every NICS Department.

### 3.2

NICSHR is standardising HR policy and services across the NICS, ensuring more consistency and fairness across all departments, proactively supporting, advising and empowering line managers to ensure all our people are managed effectively. The key roles of NICSHR are:

- Employee Relations;
- Learning and Development;
- Resourcing;
- Pay and Reward;
- Pensions, Occupational Health Service and Welfare;
- HR Support and Specialist Services; and
- Strategic HR Business Partners.

### 3.3

The Resourcing functional area is responsible for vacancy management policy and all operational activities, including external recruitment and internal moves. NICSHR Resourcing is also responsible for Strategic Workforce Planning, Talent Management and supporting Diversity and Inclusion policies, plans and initiatives. Since the introduction of NICSHR, the Resourcing function has introduced standardised processes across all teams with regard to the recording and tracking of vacancies and continues to standardise vacancy management processes across NICS Departments and Agencies.

### 3.4

The establishment of the Strategic Workforce Planning Branch in NICSHR Resourcing, brings together former Departmental and Corporate workforce planning functions, to give a specific focus and ensure dedicated resources on workforce planning for the NICS as a whole.



## NICS People Strategy

### 3.5

A draft of a NICS People Strategy has been developed and work is ongoing to refine and engage with all customers to focus attention on actions that enhance:

- Leadership and management capability across the Service;
- Our ability to manage change better; and
- The NICS as a diverse, inclusive and great place to work.

### 3.6

Engagement is continuing in early 2018 to prioritise and develop key actions to ensure the NICS is a well-led, outcome focussed organisation, with a diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

## Development of a new NICSHR Recruitment Assurance Framework

### 3.7

A key development this year was the creation of an evidence based assurance framework for appointments to the NICS. This is a robust framework which fully meets the requirements of the Commissioners' Recruitment Code. Appendix C of the Recruitment Code requires the NICS to publish:

**C.3 (a)** evidence to provide assurance that systems are in place in the NICS to ensure that selection for appointment is made in accordance with the Recruitment Code; and

**C.3 (b)** evidence to provide assurance that recruitment policies and practices in the NICS are subject to regular internal monitoring.

### 3.8

This report details the arrangements that were in place up to the formation of NICSHR. It also reports on the new framework in place for NICSHR from April 2017 providing assurance both to our regulators and customers, including the public we serve. Further detail on findings can be found in Section 5.

## NICSHR Resourcing Oversight

### 3.9

NICSHR Resourcing, in addition to the elements of the Assurance Framework, carries out regular monitoring of adherence to policy, procedures and service standards for recruitment services delivered to the NICS by HRConnect, our private sector partner. Governance meetings are held on a monthly basis and statistics against Resourcing Service Level Agreements are analysed each month.

## Marketing Strategy

### 3.10

Work in relation to a marketing and outreach strategy is ongoing following completion of the latest Article 55 statutory review into the community background profile of the NICS and the non-statutory review into gender. The outcome of these reviews will inform the outreach actions to be delivered.



# FOUR RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY



**4.1**

During this reporting period all recruitment competitions for NICS Departments were managed by HRConnect (see Appendix 1).

**4.2**

Over the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017 a total of 88 recruitment competitions were advertised attracting a total of 5,794 applications. By 1 February 2018 a total of 284 appointments had been made from these competitions. This appointment figure will increase as the merit lists from these competitions will be extant for a period of one year, in most circumstances.

Type of Competition	Perm	Temp	Total
No. of competitions	86	2	88
No. of applications	5,581	213	5,794
No. of appointments made by 1 Feb 18	264	20	284

**4.3**

Of the 88 competitions above, 9 were for Senior Civil Service (SCS) competitions which attracted 198 applications and resulted in 6 appointments being made by 1 February 2018. This year saw equal numbers of males and females appointed. It has also been noted that current employees and candidates aged 50 or over were more likely to be eligible for SCS competitions.

**4.4**

For comparison purposes 76 internal competitions (promotions and trawls) were run during the same period. The table below shows the internal competitions at SCS and below SCS level. By 1 February 2018 a total of 413 appointments had been made from these competitions.

Type of Competition	Internal SCS	Internal Below SCS	Total
No. of competitions	4	72	76
No. of appointments made by 1 Feb 18	2	411	413

**Corporate Recruitment Competitions**

**4.5**

There were no general service corporate recruitment competitions advertised during 2017 however Departments continued to have access to the existing merit list from the 2013 Permanent Administrative Officer competition. During 2017, 53 appointments were made from the permanent competition which will close in May 2018. A full evaluation of this competition will then be carried out by NISRA.

**Volume Departmental Competition**

**4.6**

A competition worthy of note that attracted a high number of applications was the Northern Ireland Prison Service competition for Custody Prison Officers, Night Custody Officers and Prisoner Custody Officers. This competition attracted 1,697 applicants. 25 appointments were made in 2017 from this competition with appointments ongoing into 2018. The Northern Ireland Prison Service conducts extensive community engagement to promote its organisation prior to recruitment with the objective of improving areas of underrepresentation. Throughout 2017 NIPS conducted outreach with the education sector, elected representatives, churches, sports and arts organisations and a number of other community organisations including the Women’s Institute and Mothers Union. NISRA will conduct an evaluation at the close of this competition.



### Corporate Recruitment Competitions at Senior Civil Service (SCS) Level

#### 4.7

Work commenced on a NICS Finance Director (Grade 5) competition in November 2016. This competition was advertised in January 2017 and attracted 98 applications. 53% of applicants were male and 47% were female. 3 appointments were made from this merit list during 2017. There were 2 females and 1 male appointed. At the time of writing it is expected that a further 2 appointments will be made from this competition.

#### 4.8

NICSHR designed and advertised a corporate competition in 2017 to fill Permanent Secretary Positions throughout the NICS. The competition was advertised in October 2017 with successful candidates announced in January 2018. This was a unique competition at Permanent Secretary Level with the intention of creating a list of suitable candidates to fill both immediate and future vacancies that may arise.

A strong pool of both internal and external applicants applied for these positions and a number of outreach measures were taken to encourage applications from women, who are currently underrepresented at this level in the NICS. 42 applications were received with an equal number of applications from males and females. At the time of writing one candidate has taken up post, with one due to commence shortly. 3 of the top 4 candidates were female. Of the top 4 candidates, 50% were serving NICS employees and 50% were external to the NICS.

#### 4.9

NICSHR began working on a corporate competition to fill Grade 3 positions through external recruitment in 2017, at the time of writing this is in the planning stages with advertising proposed to commence mid-2018.

### Recruitment Related Complaints

#### 4.10

There were 22 complaints received by HRConnect in 2017 for external recruitment competitions. Complaints have been allocated to the lead Department of the competition.

Department	Number of Complaints 2017
of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	3
for the Economy (DFE)	0
of Education (DE)	0
for Communities (DFC)	2
for Infrastructure (DFI)	2
of Finance (DOF)	9
of Health (DOH)	2
of Justice (DOJ)	3
The Executive Office (TEO)	1
Public Prosecution Service (PPS)	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>

#### 4.11

Overall 88 competitions were advertised during the reporting period attracting 5,794 applications and resulting in 22 complaints (0.38%). For comparison purposes 51 competitions were advertised in 2016, attracting 4,131 applications and resulting in 19 complaints (0.45%). There has been a slight reduction in percentage of complaints received.



## Analysis of Professional and Specialist Recruitment

### 4.12

NICSHR monitors all recruitment exercises to professional and specialist posts. Reports are produced by NISRA each quarter providing data on all recruitment exercises that have reached interview stage as well as those which have closed as no further appointments will be made. The applicant pool for each vacancy is analysed to determine if all equality groups are fairly represented while the progress of each equality group through all recruitment stages is also checked. The results of both analyses are recorded along with any possible issues for concern. The purpose of the analysis is to identify trends over time, i.e. do some posts attract more applications from one equality group or is there any evidence of lower success rates for one or more equality group? It will therefore be a few years before any patterns emerge. Any possible problems will be referred to NISRA who will advise if a more in-depth analysis should be carried out. The results of the analyses will also be used to inform future reviews into the profile of the NICS workforce.

### 4.13

The Civil Service Commissioners are provided with summaries of the analyses. In 2016 reports were received on 51 separate recruitment exercises with the number of applicants for each ranging from 3 to 1,247. Data for recruitment exercises from 2017 is still being analysed – to date 48 reports have been received with analysis being carried out on 18. To date no issues of concern have been noted.

## Summary of applications received and updated appointment figures

### 4.14

Appendix 2 of this report contains updated data tables for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. These are extracts from the NISRA report. Updated appointment figures for 2017 will be included in next year's report. For ease of comparison:

- Table 1 shows a summary of applications received for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 by equality group;
- Table 2 displays the updated appointment figures (expected and actual) for 2014, 2015 and 2016 by equality group;
- Table 3 gives a percentage summary of applications and appointments by equality group for 2014, 2015 and 2016; and
- Table 4 gives a summary of internal competitions and appointment for 2015 & 2016 for comparison purposes.

### 4.15

Whilst these tables are useful to give an overall view of the application and appointment rates by equality group the figures contained within may be heavily influenced by the type of competition advertised within the reporting period. For example, some competitions historically attract more from one equality group than another i.e. more females than males or Protestants than Catholics or vice versa. A corporate competition is analysed at the close of a competition to identify trends at each stage of a competition and action taken when required.



## Extensions to merit lists

### 4.16

Following the completion of the Commissioners’ review of Merit Lists (further detail in paragraphs 7.7-7.9), NICSHR agreed to publish information in relation to extensions to merit lists granted in the reporting year. The information below details the merit list extensions which were approved in 2017 and summarises the relevant considerations taken before agreeing to extend.

### 4.17

6 competition extensions were approved during the reporting year as detailed below:

<b>Permanent Administrative Officer (NICS)</b>			
<b>Original closing date</b>	<b>New closing date</b>	<b>No. appointments before extension</b>	<b>Anticipated number appointments after extension</b>
12/11/15	12/05/18	180	80

#### **Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list**

The decision to extend this list was based on a critical NICS business need. In particular the Department for Communities and Land and Property Services current and future staffing needs at this grade were deciding factors in the decision to extend this competition. This competition will close on the 12 May 2018.

<b>Departmental Chief Economist (DFE)</b>			
<b>Original closing date</b>	<b>New closing date</b>	<b>No. appointments before extension</b>	<b>Anticipated number appointments after extension</b>
09/06/17	09/09/17	1	1

#### **Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list**

There was an urgent Brexit related business requirement to move the substantive post-holder appointed from this competition. The Department then sought to backfill this post with the next candidate on the list. A short extension was approved to enable this to happen. It is unlikely that the pool of applicants for this competition would have changed greatly since the time of advertising. It was acknowledged that re-advertising would present an opportunity to attract more females to apply but given the circumstances the competition was extended to enable 1 further appointment to be made.



<b>Fixed Term Executive Officer 2 (DFC)</b>			
<b>Original closing date</b>	<b>New closing date</b>	<b>No. appointments before extension</b>	<b>Anticipated number appointments after extension</b>
09/08/17	09/02/18	105	55

**Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list**

No other NICS temporary EO2 supply. DfC had previously anticipated supply of EO2s from within their Department therefore planning for another external competition was not needed. Given other work priorities in the Department for Communities this supply of staff did not materialise. There were no equality and diversity reasons not to extend this merit list and given the high number of applications received and appointments made, the competition merit list was extended for 6 months to 18 months in total.

<b>Strategic Policy division – Deputy Principal Economist (DOF)</b>			
<b>Original closing date</b>	<b>New closing date</b>	<b>No. appointments before extension</b>	<b>Anticipated number appointments after extension</b>
04/10/17	04/12/17	23	2-4

**Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list**

An initial delay occurred in this competition due to the first candidate not taking up the offer with further delays encountered in making subsequent appointments from the merit list. Further immediate vacancies arose and given there were no objections from an equality viewpoint to extending the merit list a two month extension was granted.

<b>Strategic Policy Division – Deputy Principal Economist (DOF) (2nd Extension)</b>			
<b>Original closing date</b>	<b>New closing date</b>	<b>No. appointments before extension</b>	<b>Anticipated number appointments after extension</b>
04/10/17	04/02/18	26	2

**Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list**

On the 1/12/07 NICS/HR was notified of new Economist/Trade Analyst posts being created to assist with immediate priority Brexit impact analysis. This merit list was needed for the purpose of backfilling vacancies created as a result of these moves. Given a two month extension had been initially granted and there were no objections from an equality viewpoint, it was agreed to extend this for a further 4 months to allow additional appointments to take effect.



<b>Head of the NI Civil Service (TEO)</b>			
<b>Original closing date</b>	<b>New closing date</b>	<b>No. appointments before extension</b>	<b>Anticipated number appointments after extension</b>
23/11/17	23/05/18	0	1

**Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list**

The merit list for this competition has been extended as an appointment has not yet been made. Ministerial direction is required to complete the appointment from this competition. It has been confirmed that there are no objections from an equality perspective in extending this competition merit list.

**Agency Workers in the NICS**

**4.18**

The NICS has a framework in place for the provision of agency workers to the NICS. The framework has been established to fill short term vacancies (up to 51 weeks contract) required for urgent business needs that cannot be met in any other way. As at 1 July 2017 agency workers represented 3% of the overall NICS workforce. The NICS Board monitors the numbers of agency workers engaged in the NICS on a quarterly basis.



# **FIVE** ↘ **EXCEPTIONS TO THE MERIT PRINCIPLE**





**5.1**

Regulation 3 of the Commissioners’ General Regulations 2007 sets out the circumstances in which the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition shall not apply.

**5.2**

The purpose of exceptions is to provide flexibility where it can be justified to meet the business needs of the NICS. Commissioners’ monitor and scrutinise any request to make an appointment by way of exception to merit to be satisfied that it is not reasonably practicable for the appointment to be made in line with the Merit Principle. Following a review of a number of staff from an arms-length body working in NICS Departments, NICS commissioned a review which has now been completed. A number of proposals from this review, including a NICS skills audit, will be taken forward by NICS HR in 2018.

**5.3**

Appointments made by departments under Regulation 3 during the reporting period can be found in the table below.

<b>Appointments made by Exception to Merit 1 January to 31 December 2017</b>	
<b>a) Secondment</b>	
Dept. for Communities	7
Dept. for the Economy	2
Dept. of Health	2
The Executive Office	1
<b>(b) Transfer from another Civil Service of the crown</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>(c) Transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred</b>	
Dept. of Finance	3
<b>(d) Exceptional needs of the NICS</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>(e) Appointments made under Government initiatives / programmes</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>(f) Reinstatement</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

# SIX RECRUITMENT RELATED ASSURANCES





### 6.1

Formal procedures are in place to ensure that recruitment to the NICS is in accordance with the four principles set out in the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code. Policies and procedures are subject to internal monitoring and are reviewed and updated regularly, taking account of good practice and any changes in legislation.

### 6.2

Prior to the establishment of NICS HR in April 2017, Departments' adherence to the principles in the Recruitment Code were overseen and reviewed regularly by their respective Human Resource managers and departmental Establishment Officers provided written assurances in this regard.

### 6.3

For the period of 1 January to 31 March 2017, the Establishment Officers from each department have provided a written declaration to NICS HR confirming the following for this period of the reporting year:

- Systems and processes were in place within their department to provide confirmation that any appointments made under Regulation 3 of the Commissioners' General Regulations 2007 (Exceptions) complied with the Commissioners' Recruitment Code and NICS policies; and
- The application of recruitment policies and practices within the department were subject to regular review against the requirements of the Commissioners' Recruitment Code and the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual.

### 6.4

The Permanent Secretary/Accounting Officer of each department provided a signed declaration to the Chairperson of the NI Civil Service Commissioners stating that all appointments to their department within this period were made in accordance with NICS recruitment policy and the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code. In signing this declaration, consideration was given to all recruitment related issues via an assurance framework and evidence sought from the HR Director/Establishment Officer of the Department who had responsibility for recruitment matters.

### 6.5

For the period 1 April 2017 to 31 December 2018 the new assurance framework applied. This included:

- a. A review of one external competition – a competition to appoint to the post of Director of Digital Transformation in DoF and a review of an appointment made by way of exception to merit. This was an appointment to DfC via interchange by means of inward secondment. Both of these reviews found a number of areas for refinement and improvement, however, they were found to be fully compliant;
- b. Real time monitoring of exceptional appointments and extensions to merit lists – all exceptional appointments and extensions to merit lists are recorded at the point of being actioned. Accurate data on all such appointments and extensions are readily available;
- c. Assurance statements signed by HRConnect and Competition Leads when running an external competition. HRConnect have supplied a statement confirming that all assurances for external recruitment competitions have been sought in line with procedure during 2017;



- d.** Annual assurances from all Grade 7s within the Vacancy Management Team have been completed. All areas have been completed and found to be compliant;
- e.** Annual confirmation has been received from each Permanent Secretaries/ Accounting Officer that all appointments to their Department have been managed by NICSHR and NICSHR have given the assurance that these appointments have been made in line with NICS policy and procedures; and
- f.** A suite of the evidence has been collated by NICSHR and provided to the Permanent Secretary of DoF who has written to the Chair of the NI Civil Service Commissioners, confirming that all appointments during the reporting period have been made in line with NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures and in accordance with the NICS Commissioners' Recruitment Code.



# SEVEN AUDITS





## NI Civil Service Commissioners' Audits

### 7.1

Under Article 4(4) of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, Commissioners have a statutory duty to audit recruitment policies and practices in making appointments to the NICS to establish whether the Recruitment Code is being observed. The following paragraphs summarise the reviews that have taken place during 2017. The NICS remains committed to positive and regular engagement with the Commissioners on the topics included in their Audit and Review Plan.

### Review of Assurances Required under the SCS Authorisation & Approval Process

#### 7.2

Commissioners 2017/18 Strategic Audit and Review Plan included an internally focussed review of the assurances provided to them under the 4-Stage Authorisation Process.

#### 7.3

Input was sought from the stakeholders involved in the process including NICS HR, Enterprise Shared Services and HRConnect. The findings of the review were forwarded to NICS HR in early January 2018 with the following recommendations;

- To strengthen the Assurances; the review concluded that a number of existing assurances should be re-worded or removed and several new assurances should be added to improve the relevance of, and strengthen, the 4-Stage Authorisation Process.
- To improve the Presentation of Information; to include the removal of duplication of assurances within any single stage; ensuring all critical

aspects of the selection arrangements are accurately reflected in the process; removal of any unnecessary information; and ensuring Commissioners' expectations regarding the confidentiality of competition information are met and clearly evident.

- Communication with the NICS; the Review identified the need to generally seek to improve communication between the NICS and Commissioners in relation to the 4-Stage Authorisation Process.

#### 7.4

NICS HR look forward to working the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners to progress this work during 2018.

### Evaluation of Recruitment and Selection Training

#### 7.5

Evaluation of Recruitment and Selection Training was identified as an area for review as part of Commissioners' 2015/16 Audit Programme. The objective of this review was to provide Commissioners with an understanding of the current recruitment and selection training provided by the NICS to all those involved in the recruitment process and in particular to assess the extent to which expectations in the Commissioners' Recruitment Code are being met. This review completed in June 2016 and the Commissioners highlighted three areas where they thought the recruitment and selection training could be improved.



## 7.6

NICSHR began a review of Recruitment and Selection Training in 2017/2018. A Review team was formed to review all components of Recruitment and Selection training in light of the findings of the Commissioners' review of training and to ensure it meets the requirements of the Recruitment Code. Improving feedback to candidates and completion of Candidate Interview Assessment Booklets will also form part of this review. The evidence gathering phase of this review will follow the steps below with findings expected in May 2018:

- a. A review of all training material for each course;
- b. Observation of the training courses in operation;
- c. Liaise with NICSHR Learning and Development function on observations;
- d. Update Commissioners on findings and the resultant actions to be taken.

## Merit Lists – Review

### 7.7

The overall aim of the review was to examine and provide Commissioners with an understanding of the current policy and practice in relation to how merit lists are managed by the NICS, and to assess the extent to which the expectations in Commissioners' Recruitment Code are being met.

### 7.8

This review was undertaken in two parts: Strand A towards the end of 2015/16, examined the policies and processes the NICS has in place with regard to the operation of merit lists. This included an overview of the process through which staff are drawn from a merit list; the timeframes for publishing and closing merit lists; exceptions; and the extension of merit lists or the circumstances where appointments are not made in strict merit order.

Strand B commenced early 2016/17, focussed on the non-routine operation of merit lists: occasions where individuals have not been posted in strict merit order; circumstances where the NICS has extended merit lists beyond the expected closing date; and merit lists impacted by the 2014 recruitment embargo.

### 7.9

The Review of NICS Merit Lists completed in November 2016 and NICSHR has taken the following steps to address the findings of the review:

- Developed and agreed a process and templates with Commissioners to demonstrate adequate assessment, monitoring and review of decisions taken to extend merit lists;
- Inserted a statement in the CIB alerting candidates to the possibility that a merit list may be extended beyond the intended closing date, when cogent and practical reasons to do so exist; and
- Agreed to publish information in relation to the extension of any NICS merit list in the NICS Annual Report on Recruitment including the competition name, the initial closing date, the new closing date and the cogent practical reasons for its extension.



## AccessNI Audit

### 7.10

In 2017, AccessNI carried out a compliance audit on NICSHR. The purpose of this audit was for AccessNI to be satisfied that those receiving Disclosure Information were behaving responsibly and using the information in accordance with the AccessNI Service Level Agreement.

### 7.11

The audit examined the following areas and supporting evidence;

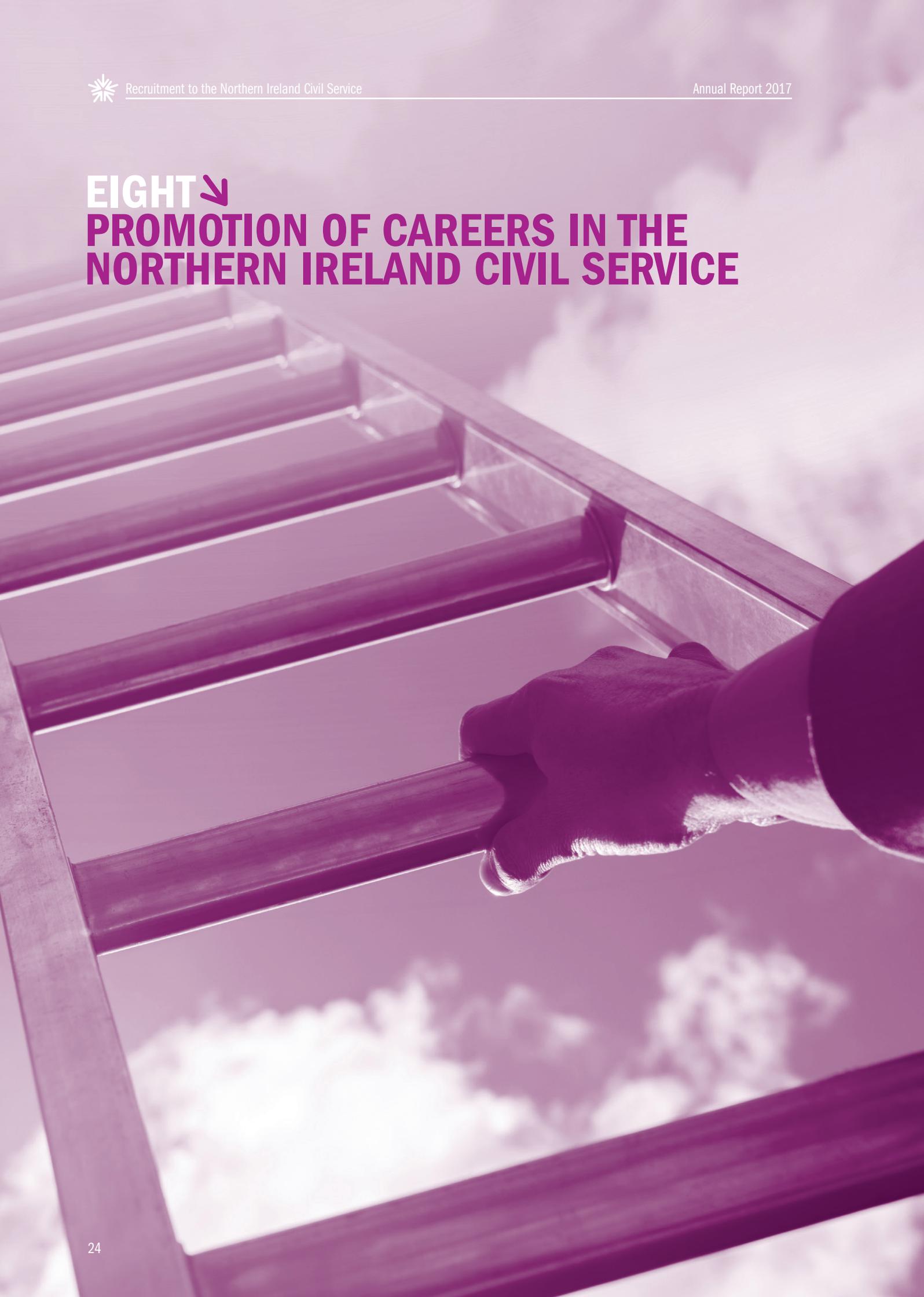
- The structure of the Responsible Body and how the Disclosure Service fits into the Organisation;
- Understanding and Usage of the Disclosure Application Form;
- How identity checks are carried out on applicants;
- Understanding of the Service Level Agreement;
- Processes for handling, storage and disposal of Disclosure Information; and
- Understanding and usage of information contained on Disclosure Certificates.

### 7.12

AccessNI concluded that NICSHR was fully compliant. There were no areas for improvement identified.



# **EIGHT** ↘ **PROMOTION OF CAREERS IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE**





## Queen’s University Belfast Internship Programme 2017-2018

### 8.1

Resourcing Division continued to work with Queen’s University to facilitate a work placement programme for students from the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics within the NICS. The programme helps to promote the NICS as an employer of choice among future graduates.

### 8.2

The Internship module enables successful applicants among final year students to spend 3 days per week, for twelve weeks, at one of a number of participating public institutions to engage in workplace based learning. The key aim is to provide a workplace based learning environment that enables students to apply and develop their knowledge and skills acquired in their first years of the university and to help prepare them for further study and/or career.

### 8.3

Alongside the Internship module, this year saw the introduction of a new Placement module to the scheme. The Placement module is smaller with less commitment required from employers with students spending 1.5 days per week with the host organisation. The types of project for this module were expected to be very similar to those for the Internship, although they would be more restricted in scope and depth.

### 8.4

The 2017/2018 programme received 17 bids from departments of which 14 students were selected and assigned by Queen’s to these departmental projects during this academic year. The following table shows the breakdown of the departments to which the successful students were allocated and whether they were Internships (I) or Placements (P):

Department	Semester 1 (26 Sept – 16 Dec 2016)	Semester 2 (30 Jan – 12 May 2017)	Total
of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	2 (1I & 1P)	1 (1I)	3 (2I & 1P)
for the Economy (DFE)	1 (1P)	0	1 (1P)
for Communities (DFC)	4 (2I & 2P)	0	4 (2I & 2P)
of Finance (DOF)	2 (1I & 1P)	0	2 (1I & 1P)
of Health (DOH)	2 (2I)	2 (1I & 1P)	4 (3I & 1P)
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 (6I &amp; 5P)</b>	<b>3 (2I &amp; 1P)</b>	<b>14 (8I &amp; 6P)</b>



## Work Experience Placements

### 8.5

The NICS continued to provide opportunities for people to benefit from work placements, welcoming applications for work placements from all schools and colleges providing education to young people. In addition, NICS HR also considers requests received from individuals who may not be in full time education and attempt, as far as possible, to facilitate appropriate work placements. Information on the NICS work experience policy can be accessed through the NICS Recruitment website as well as the application forms to be used for each request. From 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017, 238 applications were received for work experience placements across the various departments in the NICS. NICS HR worked in partnership with departments to facilitate the following 177 work experience placements throughout the reporting year:

Department	Number of Placements agreed
of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	48
for the Economy (DFE)	5
of Education (DE)	5
for Communities (DFC)	25
for Infrastructure (DFI)	12
of Finance (DOF)	29
of Health (DOH)	3
of Justice (DOJ)	43
The Executive Office (TEO)	4
Public Prosecution Service (PPS)	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>

## Career Development

### 8.6

To ensure that all external candidates considering a career within the NICS were aware of the extensive opportunities available to them as a NI Civil Servant, additional information was included in all Candidate Information Booklets. This change took effect from June 2017. “The NICS is committed to career development and offers attractive career prospects across a wide variety of roles and professions. Career development is an integral part of the performance management system. Your Personal Development Plan will identify your learning and development needs with a view to enhancing your skills and capabilities. As a NI Civil Servant you will have access to a wide range of internal job opportunities, including secondments with external organisations and are encouraged and supported in proactively managing your own career.”



# NINE ↘ DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION





### 9.1

The NICS Diversity Champions Network continued to meet regularly and is chaired jointly by Peter May, Permanent Secretary for Department for Infrastructure, and Jill Minne, Strategic Director of NICSHR. Jill Minne, the Strategic Director of NICSHR, assumed the role of joint NICS Diversity and Inclusion Champion in August 2017.

### 9.2

Following the completion of a survey on the experiences of LGB&T staff in the NICS, a network for staff was successfully launched in 2017 by the Diversity sector lead. The Network enables members to discuss issues of concern and provide support to each other as well as hearing speakers from other organisations. Several other activities are planned including holding meetings outside Belfast to provide more staff with the opportunity to participate. It had been planned that the NICS would become a member of the Rainbow Diversity Champions NI Network however as Rainbow has now set up a joint venture with Stonewall it is anticipated the NICS become a member of the new network when it is launched later this year.

### 9.3

The NICS Disability Diversity Working Group produced a report on the experiences of NICS staff with disabilities and have produced a Disability Diversity Action Plan. Work on this plan will be progressed in 2018 with the appointment of a new NICS Disability Diversity Champion Ronnie Armour.

### 9.4

The NICS Diversity champion leading of Black and Minority Ethnic Issues has held meetings with a range of representative groups to discuss issues relating to employment in the NICS.

### 9.5

The NICS Women's Network continued to work on several fronts. The primary focus for the Network has been to encourage women to develop themselves within their careers and specifically to develop the pipeline of female talent to help address the under representation of women within the SCS. A pilot to deliver mentoring circles (groups of women in Grade 6 and 7 who are jointly mentored by a pair of Senior Civil Servants) was very successful in 16/17 and a new cohort began in autumn 17.

The two programmes together have reached approximately 225 women, around 40% of the Grade 6/7 female cadre within the NICS. Plans are underway to expand the programme to include women in the DP grade. During 2017 the Women in Leadership conference was well supported by senior women from the NICS who outlined their career paths, their strategies for success and how they coped with the pressures of family life. This complemented an earlier series of "Conversations with a Purpose" which enabled small groups of women to engage on similar themes.



**9.6**

Other diversity initiatives in 2017 have included:

**A survey of all NICS staff seeking views on equality and diversity issues.**

The results of the survey were released to NICS staff by David Sterling, the Head of the NI Civil Service on 12 February 2018. The results indicated that overall engagement has increased by 2% (to 49%) since the last survey in 2015. While this was welcomed it was acknowledged that more work has to be done to achieve the NICS ambition to be a well-led, high performing organisation which is focused on delivering better outcomes for the people of NI.

**The publication in October 2017 of the latest (2016) reviews into the community background and gender profiles of the NICS workforce.**

The outcomes of both reviews were published in a single report which is available at [www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/2016%20Article%2055%20%26%20Gender%20Reviews.pdf](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/2016%20Article%2055%20%26%20Gender%20Reviews.pdf).

The review into community background (the “Article 55 Review”) found that Protestants and Roman Catholics were fairly represented in 6 out of 8 General Service grades – the same outcome as the previous reviews in 2010 and 2013.

Fair participation was also found in 20 of the 31 professional and specialist occupational groups assessed. The Gender review found males and females were fairly represented in 2 out of 9 General Service grades. It also found that both genders were fairly represented in 14 of the 31 professional and specialist occupational groups assessed.

**The delivery of Unconscious Bias training to all staff in management grades.**

This package has been designed to help staff discover what personal bias they may have, explore its causes and consider some techniques to manage it.

**Work experience placements for People with Disabilities**

**9.7**

The NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities launched in April 2016 continued to accept applications from disability organisations seeking structured work placements for their clients. Information on the scheme, including a process map and application form, is available on the NICS Recruitment website.

**9.8**

From 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017, 16 applications were received for the scheme from the following disability organisations:

Disability Organisation	Number of Applications received
Acceptable Enterprises Ltd	2
Action Mental Health – New Horizons	1
Disability Action	1
MENCAP	3
Now Group	2
The Cedar Foundation	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>



**9.9**

These 16 applications resulted in 15 placements being agreed with departments within this reporting period, 1 application could not be facilitated due to limited location options.

**9.10**

In agreeing placements NICSHR liaises with the disability organisation and with the receiving department to ensure appropriate arrangements are made based on the specific needs of the individual. It is important that work placements provide opportunity for the person to gain valuable experience which will increase their employability skills. A breakdown of the placements agreed in each department is shown below.

Department	Number of Placements agreed
of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	0
for the Economy (DFE)	0
of Education (DE)	1
for Communities (DFC)	8
for Infrastructure (DFI)	2
of Finance (DOF)	2
of Health (DOH)	1
of Justice (DOJ)	1
The Executive Office (TEO)	0
Public Prosecution Service (PPS)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**9.11**

Process design ensures that feedback is requested for all participants of the scheme in the form of questionnaires. By the end of the year, positive feedback was received in respect of 7 placements from all participants of the scheme. Most notably 100% of individuals agreed that their placement needs were assessed correctly and met by the branch and that they would recommend the scheme to others. 100% of branches agreed that they thought the scheme was worthwhile, the placement was well received within the branch and that staff involved were happy to contribute with the placement.

**9.12**

Work commenced towards the end of 2017 to consider a review of the scheme and agree a plan to promote and expand the scheme both internally within the NICS and externally with Disability Organisations in the future.

**9.13**

To recognise all of the significant work ongoing in the NICS to promote Diversity and Inclusion, 2017 saw the first Diversity and Inclusion Award at the NICS Awards 2017. This award serves to acknowledge outstanding accomplishments of an individual or team whose efforts are not part of their normal day job but whose passion helps to foster greater appreciation, advancement and celebration of diversity and inclusiveness in the NICS. The 2017 award was won by the NICS Women’s Network Team in the Department of Finance, Land and Property Services.



### 9.14

Other diversity initiatives progressing in 2017 and /or planned for 2018 include:

- A Gender Action Plan for the NICS;
- An event was held to mark International Women's Day;
- Development of a NICS Diversity Action Plan;
- In January 2018, Head of NI Civil Service, David Sterling made a commitment on behalf of the NICS, to promote mental wellbeing in the workplace by signing up to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Mental Health Charter;
- The development of a new NICS People Strategy;
- The development of a new outreach strategy to market careers in the NICS with a particular focus on those groups that are currently underrepresented in the NICS workforce;
- The development of three new training modules that will complete the new equality, diversity and inclusion training package;
- The development of transgender guidance for staff and managers to help those who are considering, or are in the process of, transitioning;
- Consideration of a new placement scheme for people from an ethnic minority background;
- Participating in the 2018 International Job Shadow Day for People with Disabilities;
- Establishment of a Cancer Support Network; and
- Participating in 2018 Belfast Pride.



# TEN ↘ CONCLUSION

## 10.1

This Annual Report provides an overview of recruitment related activity in the NICS and along with the data included in the NISRA report meets the requirements under Article 4(5) of the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 as set out in Appendix C of the NI Civil Service Commissioners Recruitment Code. NICSHR has developed a robust evidence based framework to underpin and support the assurance given

by the DoF Permanent Secretary to the Chair of the NI Civil Service Commissioners that appointments to the NICS are made on merit, and in line with the requirements of their Recruitment Code. Looking forward NICSHR will continue to improve the service provided to our customers with the aim of providing a skilled and diverse NICS workforce that is representative of the society we serve.



## Appendix 1 - Recruitment competitions which closed for applications during the reporting period

Reference	Title
IRC211264	Chief Inspector Trading Standards
IRC211724	Forest Officer Grade III (3 posts)
IRC212006	Head of Development Service (CAFRE)
IRC212830	Senior Technical Inspector (Agriculture Inspector Group 5)
IRC213108	Senior Professional and Technical Officer (SPTO) Architect
IRC213293	PPTO Mechanical Engineer
IRC213300	Principal Pharmaceutical Officer
IRC213547	Senior Professional and Technical Officer, Structural Engineer
IRC213818	Health and Safety Inspector (Chemical/Hydrocarbon/Process Engineering)
IRC213819	Health and Safety Inspector (Occupational Health & Hygiene)
IRC213821	Health and Safety Inspector
IRC213894	Deputy Chief Nursing Officer
IRC214054	Forensic Court Reporting Officer – Higher Scientific Officer – Road Traffic Collision (RTC)
IRC214076	Industrial 1 Road Worker – Southern Area
IRC214077	Forensic Court Reporting Officer – Higher Scientific Officer – Alcohol, Drugs & Toxicology
IRC214116	Preservation Assistant - SGB2
IRC214254	Financial Investigations Manager - Financial Investigation Section, Enforcement Branch (Deputy Principal)
IRC214373	Occupational Health Medical Officer (Grade 6)
IRC214378	Senior Agricultural Economist
IRC214379	YJA Residential Unqualified Care Worker, Executive Officer II
IRC214503	Chief Survey Officer NI (Grade 6)
IRC214715	Occupational Health Nurse
IRC214735	Principal Public Prosecutor
IRC215070	Finance Director
IRC215297	North Area – Industrial 1 Road Worker
IRC215320	Industrial 1 Road Worker – Western Area
IRC215515	PTO Architectural Assistant/Technician
IRC215576	Assistant Valuer
IRC215594	Mechanical Engineering Assistant - Higher Professional & Technical Officer (HPTO)
IRC215614	Mechanical Engineering Assistant – Professional & Technical Officer (PTO)
IRC215615	Electrical Engineering Assistant – Professional and Technical Officer (PTO)
IRC215617	Electrical Engineering Assistant – Higher Professional and Technical Officer (HPTO)
IRC215819	Assistant Economist
IRC215879	Internal Auditor – Staff Officer
IRC216237	ICT Placement Student
IRC216400	Principal Legal Officer
IRC216422	Senior Scientific Officer – Earth Science and Heritage
IRC216579	South Area Industrial Street Lighting Electrician
IRC216642	Director of Rivers
IRC216843	Industrial Grade 3 – Maintenance Plumber
IRC216846	Industrial Grade 3 – Heating Plant Operator
IRC216857	Industrial Grade 3 – Maintenance Electrician



Reference	Title
IRC216903	Public Prosecutor
IRC217199	Senior Lecturer in Land based Engineering and Technology, Agriculture Inspector Grade II
IRC217279	System Dynamics Modeller (Fixed Term)
IRC217283	Service Designer (Fixed Term)
IRC217579	Senior Professional and Technical Officer (SPTO) Construction Procurement Policy Advisor
IRC217718	Senior Consultant (Deputy Principal)
IRC217766	Principal Consultant (Grade 7)
IRC217778	Midwifery, Women's and Children's Nursing Officer
IRC218037	Careers Adviser
IRC218259	Second Legislative Counsel - Grade 3
IRC218317	Assistant Statistician
IRC218324	Civil Engineering Level 3 Apprentice
IRC219043	Transport Planner/Modeller (SPTO)
IRC219204	Deputy Chief Medical Officer (Public Health - including Health Protection)
IRC219305	Principal Professional and Technical Officer Structural Engineer
IRC219318	Custody Prison Officer, Night Custody Officer and Prisoner Custody Officer
IRC219328	Technical Specialist - Plant Health (Agricultural Inspector Grade III)
IRC219358	Economist - 51 Week Student Placement
IRC219404	Principal Legal Officer - Commercial and Property Division
IRC219599	Director of Communications for the Health and Social Care (HSC) System - Grade 5
IRC219719	Assistant Scientific Officer
IRC219805	Graphic Designer - Professional and Technical Officer
IRC220199	Grade 5 Director of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Economics and Statistics Division
IRC220238	Senior Medical Officer - Health Protection
IRC220241	Scientific Officer (ScO) - Water Chemistry Group Laboratories
IRC220321	Regulation Unit - Senior Scientific Officer (SScO)
IRC220380	Food Technology Technician- Inspector Group 2 - CAFRE
IRC220754	YJA Residential Night Support Grade Band 2
IRC220833	Information Communication Technology (ICT) Apprentices
IRC221088	East Area - Industrial 1 Road Worker
IRC221137	Architectural Services and Fire Safety Unit Fire Officer II, PTO
IRC221198	Architectural Services and Fire Safety Unit Fire Officer I, HPTO
IRC221279	Senior Procurement Officer
IRC221348	Industrial 2 - Vehicle and Plant Fitter
IRC221351	Mechanical Engineering Assistant - Higher Professional & Technical Officer (HPTO)
IRC221439	Staff Officer Accountants
IRC221640	Senior Horticulture Technologist, Inspector Grade II - CAFRE
IRC221778	Mechanical Design Engineering Apprentice
IRC222080	Permanent Secretary
IRC222323	Professional & Technical Officer (Electrical Engineering Assistant)
IRC222439	Higher Occupational Psychologist
IRC222587	Electrical Engineering Support Grade - Technical Grade 1 (TG1)
IRC222605	Head of Internal Audit (Grade 7)
IRC222824	Director of Strategic Planning Division (Grade 5)
IRC223084	Ballykeel Fleet Management Professional & Technical Officer (PTO) (Mechanical and Electrical)
IRC223263	Communications Officer, Communications and Engagement Team

**Appendix 2 - Summary of application and updated appointment figures**

Table 1 – Summary of applications received 2014 – 2016 by Equality Group

Equality Category	Description	2014	2015	2016
Overall	Total	6,192	4,579	4,131
Gender	Male	3,567 <sup>1</sup>	2,824	2,432
	Female	2,620	1,755	1,699
Community Background	Protestant	2,526	2,696	1,805
	Catholic	3,229	1,323	1,909
	Not Determined	437	560	417
Ethnicity	White	6,068 <sup>2</sup>	4,512	4,070
	Minority Ethnic Groups	114	67	61
Disability	With a declared disability	206	110	146
	Without a declared disability	5,986	4,469	3,985
Age-group	16-24	1,755 <sup>3</sup>	1,519 <sup>4</sup>	889 <sup>5</sup>
	25-39	3,280	2,191	2,282
	40-49	777	609	609
	50+	377	260	351
Sexual Orientation	Both sexes / same sex	222 <sup>6</sup>	243	215
	Different sex	5,966	4,336	3,916
NICS employment history	Current	571 <sup>7</sup>	104 <sup>8</sup>	559 <sup>9</sup>
	Previous	292	53	403
	None	2,742	748	3,055

<sup>1</sup> Gender information missing for 5 applicants

<sup>2</sup> Ethnicity information missing for 10 applicants

<sup>3</sup> Based on age at closing date for applications.  
Age missing / invalid for 3 applicants

<sup>4</sup> Based on age at closing date for applications

<sup>5</sup> Based on age at closing date for applications

<sup>6</sup> Sexual orientation information missing for 4 applicants

<sup>7</sup> NICS employment history missing for 2,587 applicants

<sup>8</sup> NICS employment history missing for 3,674 applicants

<sup>9</sup> NICS employment history missing for 114 applicants

Table 2 – Summary of updated appointments received 2014 – 2016 by Equality Group

Equality Category	Description	'Expected' Appointees	2014 Actual Appointees	Difference (Actual minus 'Expected')	'Expected' Appointees	2015 Actual Appointees	Difference (Actual minus 'Expected')	'Expected' Appointees	2016 Actual Appointees	Difference (Actual minus 'Expected')
Overall	Total	169	169	0	274	274	0	419	419	0
Gender	Male	127	109	18	176	177	1	241	230	-11
	Female	42	60	-18	98	97	-1	178	189	11
Community Background	Protestant	71	64	-7	161	165	4	182	206	24
	Catholic	83	98	15	79	64	-15	199	183	-16
	Not Determined	14	7	-7	33	45	12	38	30	-8
Ethnicity	White	166	#	#	269	274	5	413	#	#
	Minority Ethnic Groups	3	*	#	5	0	-5	6	*	#
Disability	With a declared disability	3	*	#	7	8	1	17	12	5
	Without a declared disability	166	#	#	8	266	-1	402	407	5
Age-group	16-24	44	47	3	97	92	-5	93	82	-11
	25-39	75	70	-5	129	143	14	237	250	13
	40-49	31	38	7	35	28	-7	56	58	2
	50+	19	14	-5	13	11	-2	32	29	-3
Sexual Orientation	Both sexes / same sex	3	5	2	16	12	-4	21	22	1
	Different sex	166	164	-2	258	262	4	398	397	-1
NICS Employment History	Current	17	27 <sup>10</sup>	10	4	13 <sup>11</sup>	9	65	88	23 <sup>12</sup>
	Previous	9	10	1	3	4	1	47	43	-4
	None	140	128	-12	46	56	10	296	270	-26

#Number has been suppressed, to avoid disclosing another number that is too small to publish

\*Number of cases too small to publish (i.e. below 5)

<sup>10</sup>NICS employment history missing for 4 appointees

<sup>11</sup>NICS employment history missing for 201 appointees

<sup>12</sup>NICS employment history missing for 18 appointees

Table 3 – Percentage summary of application and updated appointment figures 2014 – 2016 by equality group

Equality Category	Description	% Applications			% Actual Applications		
		2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Gender	Male	58	62	59	64	65	55
	Female	42	38	41	36	35	45
Community Background	Protestant	41	59	44	38	60	49
	Catholic	52	29	46	58	23	44
	Not Determined	7	12	10	4	16	7
Ethnicity	White	98	99	99	#	100	#
	Minority Ethnic Groups	2	1	1	#	0	#
Disability	With a declared disability	3	2	4	#	3	3
	Without a declared disability	97	98	96	#	97	97
Age-group	16-24	28	33	22	28	34	20
	25-39	53	48	55	41	52	60
	40-49	13	13	15	22	10	14
	50+	6	6	8	8	4	7
Sexual Orientation	Both sexes / same sex	4	5	5	3	4	5
	Different sex	96	95	95	97	96	95
NICS Employment History	Current	9	2	14	16	5	21
	Previous	5	1	10	6	1	10
	None	44	16	74	76	20	64

#Number has been suppressed, to avoid disclosing another number that is too small to publish



Table 4 – Summary of application and updated appointment figures for internal competitions (promotions and trawls only) at Senior Civil Service (SCS) and below SCS 2015 – 2016

	2015		2016	
	No. of Competitions	No. of Appointments	No. of Competitions	No. of Appointments
<b>Internal SCS Competitions</b>	0	0	3	4
Internal Competitions below SCS	4	16	39	112
<b>Total</b>	4	16	42	116

#### Notes

Includes Trawls and Promotion Boards with a closing date for applications in the relevant year.

Appointments refer to staff promoted by 1 February 2018. Further appointments could be made from some of these competitions.

