

# RECRUITMENT TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

## ANNUAL REPORT 2015

# CONTENTS

Foreword

1. Introduction
2. Executive Summary - Recruitment Activity
3. Corporate Recruitment Competitions
4. Departmental Recruitment under Regulation 3
5. Audits/reviews
6. Promotion of Careers in the Northern Ireland Civil Service
7. Improvements to Services and Other Developments
8. Conclusion

Appendices - List of recruitment competitions with a closing date  
for applications during 2015

# FOREWORD

I am pleased to publish this report from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) on recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) in 2015. The report provides a summary of recruitment in the NICS Departments during the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 and includes summary data and analysis of recruitment provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). This report also provides an overview of activities that have been initiated to improve NICS recruitment policies and practices and to promote the NICS as an employer of choice.

Numbers recruited to the NICS have fallen dramatically in comparison with previous years. This is a direct impact of the NICS-wide embargo on both recruitment and substantive promotion that was introduced in November 2014 and remained in place throughout the entire period of this report. As is evident from the figures in the report, recruitment did continue for business critical positions and the need to recruit the best talent, in open and fair competition remained a key priority for the NICS.

The annual report on recruitment 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. The Department has agreed with the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners that NISRA will produce and publish all NICS recruitment statistics. NISRA's analysis of NICS recruitment competitions 1 January 2015 - 31 December 2015 is published on NISRA's website at;

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Analysis\\_of\\_NICS\\_Recruitment\\_Competitions.html](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Analysis_of_NICS_Recruitment_Competitions.html)

This year NISRA's report also contains tables providing a summary breakdown of applicants by equality grouping for 2012, 2013 & 2014 for each Department. I trust you will find this additional information useful.



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**Corporate HR**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is regulated by the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners, who have a statutory duty to ensure that all appointments are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition (known as the Merit Principle) and provide a determinate view as to whether the Merit Principle has been upheld.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The NI Civil Service Commissioners revised their Recruitment Code in 2015 to accurately reflect improvements that had been implemented in 2013 namely to clarify the guidance in relation to requests for appointment to the NICS by way of exception to the merit principle. A further minor amendment was also made relating to the legislation by which Commissioners are appointed. A copy of this revised code is available at [www.nicscommissioners.org](http://www.nicscommissioners.org).
- 1.4 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. Departments' adherence to the principles in the Recruitment Code are overseen and reviewed regularly by their respective Human Resource managers and departmental Establishment Officers provide written assurances in this regard. Resourcing and Appointments Division in Corporate HR, Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) has responsibility for policy on recruitment to the NICS. Resourcing and Appointments Division also carries out regular monitoring of adherence to policy, procedures and service standards for recruitment services delivered to the NICS by HRConnect, our strategic private sector partner. Recruitment arrangements are also subject to external audit/reviews conducted by the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners. More information on audits/reviews is included in Section 5 of this report.

## **2. Executive Summary - Recruitment Activity**

- 2.1 The embargo on recruitment and promotion which came into effect on the 26 November 2014 continued to apply to all NICS grades and disciplines during the 2015 period of this report. This intervention, alongside other strategic personnel interventions including a voluntary exit scheme, was necessary to deliver a significant pay bill reduction across the NICS.
- 2.2 Under the terms of the embargo, Departmental Accounting Officer approval was required to make any appointments to the NICS in 2015. Staff, albeit at a lower level than previous years, continued to be recruited and appointed to departments

by HRConnect, who manage the recruitment process on behalf of the NICS. During this reporting period all recruitment activity was managed by HRConnect.

- 2.3 Over the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015, 20 recruitment competitions for permanent NICS jobs were held which attracted a total of 4,329 applications. By 1 February 2016, 38 appointments had been made from these competitions.
- 2.4 Over the same period, 1 recruitment competition for temporary NICS jobs was held. This competition attracted 250 applications. By 1 February 2016 a total of 14 appointments had been made from this competition.
- 2.5 During this reporting period, 5 competitions for Senior Civil Service jobs were held attracting 50 applications. By 1 February 2016, 3 appointments had been made from these competitions.
- 2.6 A list of all the recruitment competitions which closed for applications during the reporting period can be found at Appendix 1 of this report. 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.
- 2.7 The Annex to this year's NISRA report also provides summary updates by the various equality categories on appointments from recruitment competitions which closed for applications during 2012, 2013 and 2014 at the NICS overall level, by Department for departmental competitions, and separate tables on NICS corporate competitions.

### **Recruitment Related Complaints**

- 2.8 There were 6 complaints received by HRConnect in 2015 for external recruitment competitions. Given that a recruitment embargo was in place throughout 2015, a low level of complaints would be expected. Complaints have been allocated to the Department who led on the competition. Complaints from corporate competitions are therefore attributed to DFP.

<b>Department</b>	<b>Number of Complaints</b>
	<b>2015</b>
DEL	1
DFP	2
DOJ	1
PPS	2

### **3. Corporate Recruitment Competitions**

3.1 There were no corporate recruitment competitions advertised during the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015.

#### **Permanent and Temporary Administrative Officer (AO)**

3.2 Competitions to recruit permanent and temporary Administrative Officers (AO) were launched in July 2013. These competition merit lists were scheduled to close in November 2015 but have been extended.

3.3 During this reporting period, 11 appointments were made from the temporary AO competition. There were no appointments made from the permanent AO competition.

#### **NI Fast Stream Scheme**

3.4 There were no appointments made to the Fast Stream Scheme in 2015 due to the embargo on recruitment and promotion that was introduced at the end of 2014. The review into the effectiveness of the Fast Stream Scheme in achieving its aim to recruit and appoint high calibre graduates with potential to reach at least Grade 7 within their time on the scheme was completed by NISRA in 2015.

#### **Senior Civil Service (SCS) Grade 3 and Grade 5**

3.5 Competitions to recruit staff to general service vacancies at SCS Grade 3 and Grade 5 levels were advertised in October 2013. These lists remained open during the period of this report with 1 appointment being made from the Grade 3 competition. There were no appointments made from the Grade 5 competition.

### **4. Departmental Recruitment under Regulation 3 – Exceptions to the Merit Principle**

4.1 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. Individual departments have provided assurance to Corporate HR that appointments made in 2015 were in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 3 of the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code. Appointments made by departments under Regulation 3 during the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 were as follows:

**Reg 3. (a)** – where the person is appointed on secondment:

<b>Department/Agency</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure	3
Department of the Environment	1

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	5
Department of Justice	1
Department for Regional Development	1

**Reg 3. (b)** – where the person holds a situation in another Civil Service of the crown:

**None**

**Reg 3. (c)** - where the person is, or has recently been, employed on functions which had been or were being transferred to the Crown:

Department/Agency	Numbers
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	1
Department of Justice	125*

\*Formation of Legal Services Agency on 1 April 2015.

**Reg 3. (d)** - exceptional needs of the NICS:

**None**

**Reg 3. (e)** – appointments made under Government initiatives / programmes:

Department/Agency	Numbers
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	1

**Reg 3. (f)** - Where the person has previously held a situation in the Civil Service and has been considered for reinstatement:

**None**

(The data presented in section 4 is management information provided by NI Departments and does not fall within the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.)

## 5. Audits/Reviews

5.1 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 audits that have taken place during 2015. The NICS remains committed to engaging with the Commissioners and ultimately improving the service we provide to those seeking employment in the NICS.

## **Recruitment related data gathered and analysed by the NICS**

- 5.2 Work on this review commenced in 2015. The objective of this review was to better understand the data available and how it is used to identify issues; inform recruitment related decisions and strategies; and address the requirements of the Recruitment Code. Commissioners have identified three key areas for discussion which will be progressed through engagement meetings with the NICS.

### **Evaluation of Recruitment and Selection training**

- 5.3 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 is 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 commenced in November 2015 and is currently ongoing.

### **Merit Lists - Scoping Exercise**

- 5.4 The appropriate management of Merit Lists is fundamental to the operation of the Commissioners' four Recruitment Principles in NICS competitions as it ensures that people are appointed in a meritorious, suitable, consistent and accountable process.
- 5.5 The purpose of this scoping exercise is to consider and seek to understand the policy and practical procedures / guidance available for HR staff / HR Connect in relation to the management of merit lists for appointments to the NICS. Following consideration of the outcomes of the scoping exercise, Commissioners may decide to review a sample of NICS merit lists to ensure that they are managed in line with the NICS policy and procedures and the Commissioners' Recruitment Code.

## **6. Promotion of Careers in the Northern Ireland Civil Service**

### **Strategy for Marketing the NICS**

- 6.1 Early work on the development of a strategy to market and promote careers in the NICS is under way. This strategy will consider the measures already in place to promote the NICS as an employer of choice, identify underrepresented groups and suggest improvements to be made. Diversity will be a key theme throughout as it is recognised that organisations with a diverse workforce are likely to be more innovative and ultimately successful. It will cover the potential barriers to employment in the NICS that underrepresented groups, in particular, may encounter and outline, where possible, the steps to be taken to address these. Roles and responsibilities will be defined and an action plan devised incorporating any relevant actions from the diversity work programme. Further detail on the diversity work programme is contained in section 7 of this report. Staff have also



attended a number of STEM diversity events and employers equality networks to share good practice.

### **Queen's University Belfast Internship Programme 2015-2016**

6.2 Resourcing and Appointments Division continued to work with Queen's University to facilitate a placement programme for interns (in their penultimate year) from the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy and those studying the Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) degree to positions within the NICS. The programme helps to promote the NICS as an employer of choice among future graduates. The 2015/2016 programme allocated 11 students to departmental projects during this academic year.

6.3 The following table shows the breakdown of the departments to which the successful interns were allocated:

<b>Department</b>	<b>No of interns</b>
DARD	1
DCAL	3
DE	1
DEL	1
DFP	1
DHSSPS	2
DSD	1
OFMDFM	1
Total	11

6.4 The interns allocated to DARD, DE, DEL, DFP, DSD, OFMDFM and one of the DCAL students commenced their placements in September 2015. The DHSSPS and 2 remaining DCAL students were given start dates in February 2016, one of which withdrew prior to commencement. Feedback on the success of these placements will be obtained on their completion. Following their placements the students will have acquired a clear understanding of the operation of the NICS, produced a body of research work that is both academically sound and of practical use for the NICS and developed a range of skills including team working.

### **Work Placements**

6.5 The NICS provides opportunities for young people to benefit from work placements within our large and diverse workforce. We welcome applications for work placements from all schools and colleges providing education to young people. In addition, we also consider 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 2015 to 31 December 2015, 220 applications were received for work placements across the various departments in the NICS. Resourcing and Appointments Division worked in partnership with departments to facilitate work placements. The breakdown of placements agreed by departments is as follows:

<b>Department</b>	<b>No of placements agreed</b>
DARD	29
DCAL	7
DE	3
DEL	7
DETI	5
DFP	15
DHSSPS	2
DOE	35
DOJ	6
DRD	7
DSD	17
OFMDFM	4
PPS	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>

### **Work experience placements for People with Disabilities**

- 6.6 The NICS recognises that for people with disabilities, work placements can be the key to accessing the world of work from which they might otherwise be excluded. Therefore work experience and work placement are excellent interventions to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to gain experience and skills in work which may lead to employment in the future.
- 6.7 In January 2014, CHR introduced a pilot scheme aimed at facilitating placements specifically for those with a disability. During this reporting year the pilot scheme feedback was overwhelmingly positive from participants, disability organisations, facilitating departments and business areas.
- 6.8 Following the successful pilot, in 2015 work commenced on developing a new permanent scheme. This new scheme will launch in April 2016 and will provide structured work placements facilitated for individuals via Disability Organisations. It will ensure opportunities are specifically available for people with disabilities and will also allow for targeted marketing within the disability sector.

## **7. Improvements to Services and Other Developments**

### **AccessNI**

- 7.1 Appointments and Marketing Branch within Corporate HR is registered with AccessNI as a responsible and registered body to allow the processing of basic, standard and enhanced clearances for appointments made by HRConnect to the NICS.
- 7.2 Section 2(3) of the AccessNI Code of Practice states that Registered Bodies shall; *“co-operate with requests from AccessNI to undertake assurance checks as to the proper use and safekeeping of disclosure information”*. AccessNI regularly conduct audits with Registered Bodies to ensure conformity with their Code of Practice. Corporate HR remained fully compliant with AccessNI requirements during this reporting period.
- 7.3 AccessNI is revising their Code of Practice due to a number of changes, most notably the introduction of their online application process which has simplified the process for applicants and employers alike. During this reporting year Corporate HR worked with HRConnect to ensure all procedures and processes accurately reflected the introduction of the AccessNI online facility.

### **HRConnect**

- 7.4 Corporate HR continued to work in partnership with HRConnect to ensure that policy and procedures are adhered to. Advice and guidance was regularly provided to HRConnect on the implementation of NICS recruitment policy with the aim of providing an exemplary service to competition applicants and job seekers. Corporate HR, in consultation with colleagues in Enterprise Shared Services, continued to monitor the recruitment service provided to NICS Departments by means of service level agreements.

### **Recruiting People with Disabilities**

- 7.5 All requests for reasonable adjustments to be made in the application, selection and appointment process are considered initially by HRConnect, who refer to other professional bodies for advice and guidance as appropriate depending on the nature of adjustment required.
- 7.6 The NICS is committed to offering equality of opportunity to all. In doing so we are committed to removing barriers to employment in the NICS that may exist for people with disabilities. The policy on reasonable adjustments in the NICS (Recruiting People with Disabilities) is currently under review and will be published in 2016/2017 to reflect improved arrangements in facilitating reasonable adjustment requests.

## Diversity

7.7 In early 2015, Peter May, Permanent Secretary for DRD, was appointed as Diversity Champion for the NICS, and in July 2015 Peter officially launched and endorsed the new policy statement on equality, diversity and inclusion developed by DFP Corporate HR. The NICS operates in an increasingly diverse community, and the people who provide and use our services have diverse characteristics and different experiences, needs and aspirations. Staff want to work in a harmonious workplace, and to feel valued, respected and included, irrespective of gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race/ethnic origin, religious belief or political opinion, disability, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation and age.

7.8 In order to provide a high quality service the NICS needs to attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best people at all levels. This new policy statement is based on three key principles:-

**Equality**- the NICS promotes equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

**Diversity** – the NICS accepts each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity. By working together we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders.

**Inclusion** – the NICS creates a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way consistent with, and adheres to NICS values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

7.9 Each Department now has its own Diversity Champion, who regularly come together as a group to look at what the NICS needs to do in overall terms to advance awareness, knowledge and understanding of the issues, and to ensure diversity and inclusion are firmly embedded within Departments and across the Service in a way that embraces and values difference. In addition, 'Diversity Leads' have been identified to take forward specific issues relating to the following sectors - Disability, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), Black and Ethnic Minority (BEM) and Gender.

7.10 A 12 month diversity work programme has been agreed, and actions to be taken forward include carrying out an LGBT survey; developing and maintaining good relationships with key diversity sector interest groups; focus on diversity issues to be included in review of marketing strategy for future NICS recruitment; and the development of a diversity webpage on NICS Intranet.

## **NICS Competency Framework**

- 7.11 The new Competency Framework has been in operation for all NICS recruitment competitions from the 1 April 2015. This framework comprises of 10 competencies, clustered under 3 strategic themes – Setting Direction, Engaging People and Delivering Results.
- 7.12 During 2015 CHR engaged with Heads of profession in the NICS to take forward the consideration of additional professional / specialist competencies. Following this engagement, the decision was made that the generic Competency Framework meets professional / specialist requirements and therefore, no additional competencies, relating to a particular specialism, are required.

## **Strategic Review of Resourcing**

- 7.13 As part of its on-going work programme to support strategic resourcing in NICS, Corporate HR initiated a strategic review of staff resourcing during 2012 and the initial scoping phase of this work was agreed in early 2013. Due to other priorities during 2013/14 this work was put on hold. Work has been progressing in 2015 and to date options have been developed for the future management of the priority pools (DDA, Surplus and Welfare). Research has also been carried out which will inform consideration of job roles/groups for the NICS general service grades. Key conclusions and proposals may have implications for recruitment and all stakeholders will be kept informed accordingly.

## **Implementing recommendations to minimise adverse impact**

- 7.14 Corporate HR commissioned research in 2013 on the causes of identified adverse impact in NICS recruitment competitions for first line managers focusing on the Executive Officer 2 competitions held in 2007 and 2011. The report provided 11 recommendations as to how the NICS might further mitigate potential adverse impact within selection and recruitment processes.
- 7.15 Corporate HR provided a progress report to the DFP Committee on 18 March 2015. The initial report and the progress report was published on DFP's website at <https://www.dfpni.gov.uk/articles/study-identified-adverse-impact-nics-recruitment-competitions-first-line-managers>

This report shows that substantial progress had been made in implementing the recommendations. However the introduction of the embargo in November 2014 has impacted significantly on continuing progress in this area. Corporate HR will, however, continue to review its recruitment policies and processes and take such steps as are necessary to minimise the potential for adverse impact in preparation for the time when recruitment levels increase.

## **HR Centre of Excellence Project**

- 7.16 On 1 October 2015 the HR Centre of Excellence project team was established to develop options for the future delivery of retained HR services for the NICS. The work of the project team falls within the remit of the NICS-wide cross cutting reform programme, as outlined in the recent Fresh Start agreement.
- 7.17 The work of the project team is driven by the need to ensure consistent, high quality and efficient HR services during a time of significant change for the NICS, and to build on the good progress already made in transforming HR service delivery. The project will cover both Corporate HR functions including HR policy, pay policy, welfare, Occupational Health and pensions and Departmental HR functions such as business partnering and workforce planning as well as learning and development including provision of generic training currently delivered by the Centre for Applied Learning. The target operational date is 1 April 2017.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 The content of the NISRA analysis of recruitment competitions to the NICS alongside the Departmental assurances provided to Corporate HR demonstrate that NICS recruitment policy and practices are open, fair and transparent and appointments are made in accordance with the Merit Principle. This Annual Report illustrates the efforts made by Resourcing and Appointments Division to continue to deliver an effective resourcing service to NICS Departments and to build a solid foundation for the resourcing functions of the future NICS.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Competitions with a closing date for applications in 2015**

Communications Manager (Deputy Principal)

Communications Officer (Staff Officer)

Custody Prison Officers (CPOs) & Night Custody Officers (NCOs)

Departmental Solicitor and Head of the Government Legal Services for Northern Ireland

Director of Registration/ Registrar of Titles (Grade 5)

Group Head of Internal Audit and Fraud Investigation Services (Grade 5)

Head of Environmental Crime Unit (Unified Grade 6)

Head of Transport Planning & Modelling

ICT Apprentices

ICT Placement Students

Legislative Counsel – Grade 5 (2 posts)

Líofa Development Officer (Staff Officer)

Líofa Support Officer (Executive Officer 1)

Medical Advisor (Grade 6)

Multimedia & Digital Technician

Nursing Officer, Mental Health, Physical and Learning Disability and Older People's Services

Nursing Officer, Workforce, Education & Health Facility Planning

Principal Professional and Technology Officer (PPTO) Architect

Prisoner Custody Officers (PCOs)

Registrar General and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (Grade 3)

Reprographics Technician - Executive Officer II (EOII)