



Recruitment to the
Northern Ireland Civil
Service

Annual Report
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An Roinn

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is published by the Department of Finance (DOF) on behalf of all NICS Departments and Agencies. It provides a summary of recruitment activity in the NICS during the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016. The NICS 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. In addition to providing data on recruitment competitions this report also summarises key improvements to recruitment policy and process and highlights ongoing initiatives in the wider NICS.
- 1.2 The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) produce and publish all NICS recruitment statistics at the behest of the Department of Finance. 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 2016 - 31 December 2016 is published on NISRA's website at;

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/ni-government-human-resource-statistics/recruitment-competition-statistics>
- 1.3 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). 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. This annual 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.
- 1.4 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 9 of this report.

2. Key Developments in 2016

Implementation of the NICS Departmental Restructuring Programme

2.1 The Stormont House Agreement of 23 December 2014 included a commitment that the number of Departments should be reduced from twelve to nine. In November 2015, the subsequent 'Fresh Start' agreement confirmed the reallocation of functions in the new departmental structure. The new structure was implemented on 9 May 2016.

The Departments' names are now as follows;

- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA);
- Department for Communities (DfC);
- Department for the Economy (DfE);
- Department of Education (DE);
- Department of Finance (DoF);
- Department of Health (DoH);
- Department for Infrastructure (DfI);
- Department of Justice (DoJ); and
- The Executive Office (TEO).

The Public Prosecution Service remains as a non – Ministerial government department.

2.2 For the purposes of this report the Permanent Secretary/Accounting Officer of a Department is responsible for providing an assurance for any functions transferred into their Department from 9 May 2016. Appointments made as an exception to the Merit Principle are shown in section 4.2 and listed by the original appointing Department.

NICS HR

2.3 The NICS HR project (formerly referred to as the HR Centre of Excellence Project) forms part of the wider Cross Cutting Reform Programme as outlined in the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements. The project seeks to continue the transformation in HR service delivery which was initiated through the e-hr HR Connect programme in 2006. The NICS HR project will establish a central NICS

organisation to deliver the retained HR functions of the NICS, drawing together those currently delivered by Corporate HR, Departmental HR, CAL, and Job Evaluation analysts (phase 1).

- 2.4 NICS HR will be operational from 3 April 2017, and will provide services to the core NICS Departments and related bodies whose staff are employed on NICS terms and conditions.
- 2.5 The NICS Board has recognised that it is necessary to reshape the NICS HR service delivery model to achieve greater consistency of approach across Departments. During this transformation, HR staff will be supported in continuing to provide a high quality service in the context of significant changes impacting all Departments with reduced resources. This should ultimately mean improved effectiveness and efficiency in HR service delivery across the NICS

Lifting of Embargo on Recruitment and Promotion

- 2.6 An NICS-wide embargo on recruitment and promotion had been in place since November 2014. This embargo was lifted in April and was a very welcome step taken by the NICS Board in 2016 to enable filling of future vacancies. A measured approach was taken by Departments, however, to ensure costs savings from the Voluntary Exit Scheme in 2015 were not eroded and that there was no increase to the NICS paybill. There was an increase in the number of competitions advertised in 2016, 30 as compared to 21 in 2015 however, as expected, there has been no return to the high level of recruitment activity as was seen in 2013 with 105 externally advertised recruitment competitions.

3. Executive Summary – Recruitment Activity

- 3.1 During this reporting period all recruitment competitions for NICS Departments were managed by HRConnect. These competitions covered a diverse range of occupations at various grades across NICS Departments and it is pleasing to note that NICS competitions continue to attract a wide pool of candidates.
- 3.2 Over the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016 a total of 51 recruitment competitions were advertised attracting a total of 4,131 applications. The application figures were boosted by the launch of a Fixed Term EO2 competition by the Department for Communities. By 1 February 2017 a total of 196 appointments had been made from these competitions. This appointment figure will increase as the merit lists from these competitions will be extant for one year.

Type of Competition	Permanent	Temporary	Total
Number of competitions	48	3	51
Number of applications	2,681	1,450	4,131
Number of appointments made by 1 Feb 17	79	117	196

3.3 Of the 51 competitions above, 11 were for Senior Civil Service (SCS) competitions which attracted 131 applications and resulted in 5 appointments being made by 1 February 2017. All of the appointees to date were male. There are a number of ongoing initiatives in the NICS to address the gender imbalance in the SCS and these are referred to later in the report. It has also been noted that current employees and candidates aged 50 or over were more likely to be eligible for the competition.

3.4 For comparison purposes 42 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 2017 a total of 54 appointments had been made from these competitions.

Type of Competition	Internal SCS	Internal Below SCS	Total
Number of competitions	2	40	42
Number of appointments made by 1 Feb 17	1	53	54

Corporate Recruitment Competitions

3.5 There were no general service corporate recruitment competitions advertised during 2016 however Departments continued to have access to the existing merit lists from the 2013 Permanent and Temporary Administrative Officer competitions. 30 appointments were made from the permanent competition and no appointments were made from the temporary competition which subsequently closed on 10 October 2016.

3.6 There were no appointments made to the Fast Stream Scheme in 2016 due to the embargo on recruitment and promotion that was introduced at the end of 2014. Following the lifting of the embargo, the NICS Board agreed that the NICS would participate in the recruitment exercise due to launch in autumn 2017, with the next intake to be appointed in autumn 2018.

Corporate Recruitment Competitions at Senior Civil Service (SCS) Level

- 3.7 Competitions to recruit staff to general service vacancies at SCS Grade 3 and Grade 5 levels were advertised in October 2013. During the period of this report 1 appointment was made from the Grade 3 competition and 1 from the Grade 5 competition (1 further Grade 5 took up appointment in January 2017). Both the SCS Grade 3 and Grade 5 competitions are now closed.
- 3.8 A competition to appoint the Head of the Civil Service was advertised in September 2016. This competition was managed in line with a new process that was introduced and specifically designed for appointments at this level. Corporate HR and Departmental HR of The Executive Office were joint competition leads. Further detail on the development of this process can be found in paragraphs 6.4 to 6.6. At the time of writing this report no appointment has been made from this competition.
- 3.9 Work commenced on a NICS Finance Director (Grade 5) competition in November 2016. This competition was advertised in 2017 and will be used to fill vacancies which arise at this grade in NICS Departments in the forthcoming year.

Recruitment Related Complaints

- 3.10 There were 19 complaints received by HRConnect in 2016 for external recruitment competitions. Complaints have been allocated to the Department who led on the competition.

Department	Number of Complaints 2016
DAERA	1
DfC	4
DfE	1
Dfi	3
DoF	7
DOJ	1
TEO	2
Total	19

- 3.11 DoF ran the highest number of competitions over the reporting period (12) which attracted 562 applications and resulted in the highest number of complaints (7), 1.24% of applications received. Overall 51 competitions were advertised during the reporting period attracting 4,131 applications and resulting in 19 complaints (0.45%).

Summary of applications received and updated appointment figures for 2013-2015

3.12 Appendix 2 of this report contains updated data tables for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015. These are extracts from the NISRA report. Updated appointment figures for 2016 will be included in next year's report. For ease of comparison;

- Table 1 shows a summary of applications received for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 by equality group.
- Table 2 displays the updated appointment figures (expected and actual) for 2013, 2014 and 2015 by equality group.
- Table 3 gives a percentage summary of applications and appointments by equality group for 2013, 2014 and 2015.

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. In addition to this NISRA now provide data to be analysed on a quarterly basis to Corporate HR for professional and technical positions. This analysis will identify trends over time on a competition basis. Further detail on this is contained in section 6.1 and 6.2 of this report.

4. 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.

4.2 Appointments made by departments under Regulation 3 during the reporting period can be found in the tables below. These have been broken down for the period 1 January to 9 May and from the 9 May to 31 December 2016 to cover the period before and after Departmental restructuring.

Appointments made by Exception to Merit 1 January to 9 May 2016

(a) Secondment

Dept. of Education

2

Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	2
Dept. for Regional Development	3
Dept. for Social Development	1
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	1
(b) Transfer from another Civil Service of the crown	
None	
(c) Transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred	
Dept. of Finance and Personnel	6
(d) Exceptional needs of the NICS	
None	
(e) Appointments made under Government initiatives / programmes	
None	
(f) Reinstatement	
None	
Total	15

Appointments made by Exception to Merit 9 May to 31 December 2016

(a) Secondment	
Dept. of Health	1
Dept. for Infrastructure	1
The Executive Office	1
(b) Transfer from another Civil Service of the crown	
None	
(c) Transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred	
None	
(d) Exceptional needs of the NICS	
Dept. for Infrastructure	1

(e) Appointments made under Government initiatives / programmes

None

(f) Reinstatement

None

Total

4

5. Recruitment Related Assurances

- 5.1 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. 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.
- 5.2 The Establishment Officers from each department have provided a written declaration to Corporate HR confirming the following for this reporting year;
- Systems and processes are in place within their department to provide confirmation that any appointments made under Regulation 3 of the Commissioners' General Regulations 2007 (Exceptions) comply with the Commissioners' Recruitment Code and NICS policies; and
 - The application of recruitment policies and practices within the department are subject to regular review against the requirements of the Commissioners' Recruitment Code and the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual.
- 5.3 The Permanent Secretary/Accounting Officer of each department has provided a signed declaration to the Chairperson of the NI Civil Service Commissioners stating that all appointments to their department have been made in accordance with NICS recruitment policy and the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code. In signing this declaration, consideration has been given to all recruitment related issues via an assurance framework and evidence sought from the HR Director/Establishment Officer of the Department who has responsibility for recruitment matters.

6. Improvements to Services

Analysis of Professional and Specialist Recruitment

- 6.1 Following completion of their audit into analysis of recruitment related data, the Civil Service Commissioners made several recommendations. In response, Corporate HR revised the arrangements for reviewing recruitment data for Professional and Specialist posts. Under the new arrangements, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) provide data on recruitment activity to Corporate HR each quarter. It is analysed by Corporate HR in terms of the diversity of the applicant pool and the success rates of each equality group through all stages of the recruitment process. The purpose of the analysis is to identify trends over time, i.e. do some vacancies attract more applications from one equality group or is there any evidence of lower success rates for one or more equality groups? The analysis will also inform future reviews into the community background and gender profiles of the NICS workforce.
- 6.2 At the time of writing, 2 NISRA reports have been received covering 15 recruitment competitions that had a closing date between 1 January and 30 June 2016. No appointments had been made to any of the competitions. The number of applicants ranged from 9 to 1,247. It is too early to reach any conclusions about trends or patterns however nothing has been noted which gives immediate cause for concern.

Introduction of Permanent Secretary Assurance Statement

- 6.3 During 2016, consultation was ongoing between Corporate HR and Commissioners regarding the findings of the 2015/16 Review of NICS Recruitment Related Information and Data. One of the high level issues identified was corporate oversight in relation to recruitment related departmental compliance / assurance statements. Corporate HR developed an interim process and the NICS Board, at its meeting on the 25 November 2016, agreed that Permanent Secretaries/Accounting Officers would provide an evidence based assurance statement to Civil Service Commissioners to cover the 2016 recruitment period.

Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Appointment Process

- 6.4 During this reporting period the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual was updated to Version 15. This update was in relation to the arrangements that are now in place to enable the active involvement of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister (FM & dFM) in the recruitment and selection process to appoint to the position of Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (HOCS). Consultation on this change began in October 2014 when the Civil Service Commission in Great Britain

announced that, for Head of Department appointments in the future, the Prime Minister would be able to make the final selection decision from candidates assessed as appointable by an independent panel. There was political consensus for similar arrangements to apply in Northern Ireland and the NI Civil Service Commissioners were approached accordingly with proposals to introduce a similar process.

- 6.5 The position of HOCS is unique in terms of its role within The Executive Office and the need for a close working relationship with both FM & dFM. It was therefore important to ensure that any arrangements made for this recruitment competition were in line with standard policy and procedures, i.e. any appointment would be made on the basis of merit, free from personal or political partiality. Should a FM & dFM wish to play an active role in the recruitment and selection process they must co-chair the second interview. The interview is criteria based and marks are awarded accordingly, as is established NICS procedure. Furthermore, as with all recruitment competitions to the Senior Civil Service, Civil Service Commissioners continue to have an authorisation and approval role through their 4-Stage authorisation procedure.
- 6.6 The Commissioners also reviewed and made a number of amendments to their Recruitment Code to ensure clarity in relation to the respective roles and responsibilities of Corporate HR and the Commissioners. A copy of this revised code is available at www.nicscommissioners.org.

Conflict Related Convictions

- 6.7 Subsequent to the outcome of a Judicial Review hearing in respect of a contractor working in the NICS, a review of existing policies and practices in respect of conflict related convictions and suitability for employment in the NICS was conducted. As a result of this the Minister of Finance sought Executive approval for the NICS to adopt the Employers Guidance on Recruiting People with Conflict Related Convictions. On the 28 September 2016, following Executive approval to do so, the Minister of Finance made the decision to adopt the best practice guidelines in full. As of that date, mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that any case of a person presenting with a conflict related conviction is considered in line with the Employers Guidance.
- 6.8 The Ex-Prisoners' Working Group was instrumental in the production of the Employers Guidance referred to above. This guidance recommended that a Tripartite Review panel was set up to consider individual cases, and build up evidence regarding the acceptance and adoption of the Guidance Principles. Corporate HR have consulted with officials from The Executive Office (TEO) who provide the secretariat to the Ex-Prisoners' Working Group and directly with the Chair of the Tripartite Review Panel in considering NICS policy amendments.

- 6.9 On the 23 December 2016, Version 16 of the NICS Policy and Procedures Manual was published. This revision reflected the decision by the NICS to adopt the best practice guidelines in recruiting people with conflict related convictions. The basic principle of these guidelines is that any conviction for a conflict-related offence that pre-dates the Good Friday Agreement (April 1998) should not be taken into account unless it is materially relevant to the employment being sought.
- 6.10 The implementation of this guidance by the NICS will be a positive step for the work ongoing in relation to post-conflict transition. It will address Section B1(b) of the Executive Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime in respect of recruitment and vetting to NICS Departments.

NICS Assessment Testing

- 6.11 Corporate HR have been liaising with Occupational Psychologists in the Department for Communities (DfC) in relation to assessment testing. This is as a direct result of NISRA withdrawing the service they previously provided in respect of tests. DfC have advised that their Occupational Psychologists can provide support in relation to the following areas:-
- Advice on the range of tests to be used and on the purchase of off-the-shelf tests;
 - Advice on requests from candidates for reasonable adjustments in testing;
 - Establishment of weightings and cut off points.
- 6.12 Change proposals have been drafted to ensure processes are designed within HRConnect to incorporate DfC Occupational Psychologists into the recruitment and selection process at the required stage. Corporate HR welcome the involvement of DfC Occupational Psychologists which will undoubtedly add value to the recruitment process.

Marketing Strategy

- 6.13 Work in relation to a Marketing Strategy has been put on hold pending completion of the latest Article 55 statutory review into the community background profile of the NICS and the non-statutory review into gender. Representation of other Section 75 groups will also be considered in this review. The outcome of these reviews will form the basis of the outreach actions of the Marketing Strategy.

Strategic Review of Resourcing

- 6.14 As part of the on-going work programme to support strategic resourcing in the NICS, research was conducted to inform consideration of job roles/groups for the NICS

general service grades. HR Partners' Forum considered this research and determined that there was no compelling case for the NICS to make a wholesale move to job roles, at this time. However, they requested further work to explore how job roles could be used in certain circumstances, for example, where there was insufficient demand to justify a volume competition. Key conclusions and proposals may have implications for recruitment and all stakeholders will be kept informed accordingly.

7. Promotion of Careers in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Queen's University Belfast Internship Programme 2016-2017

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The 2016/2017 programme received 20 bids from departments of which 11 students were selected and assigned by Queen's to departmental projects during this academic year. The following table shows the breakdown of the departments to which the successful interns were allocated:

Department	Semester 1 (26 Sept – 16 Dec 2016)	Semester 2 (30 Jan – 12 May 2017)	Total
of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	1		1
for the Economy (DFE)	1	1	2
of Education (DE)	1		1
for Communities (DFC)	1		1
of Finance (DOF)	1		1
of Health (DOH)		2	2
of Justice (DOJ)		1	1

The Executive Office (TEO)	2		2
Total	7	4	11

Work Experience Placements

7.3 The NICS continued to provide opportunities for people to benefit from work placements. 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 2016 to 31 December 2016, 212 applications were received for work experience placements across the various departments in the NICS. Resourcing and Appointments Division worked in partnership with departments to facilitate the following 152 work experience placements throughout NICS departments within this reporting year;

Department	Number of Placements agreed
of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	59
for the Economy (DFE)	4
of Education (DE)	1
for Communities (DFC)	10
for Infrastructure (DFI)	11
of Finance (DOF)	32
of Health (DOH)	0
of Justice (DOJ)	16
The Executive Office (TEO)	7
Public Prosecution Service (PPS)	12
Total	152

8. Diversity, Inclusivity and Equality of Opportunity Initiatives

- 8.1 The NICS Diversity Champions Network is jointly chaired by Peter May, Permanent Secretary for the Department for Infrastructure and Noel Lavery, Permanent Secretary for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Diversity Champions Network Group continued to meet on a regular basis throughout 2016. A number of positive initiatives have been progressed in the various sectors.
- 8.2 The Diversity Sector lead focusing on LGBT issues has been liaising with the Rainbow Project. The outcome of this has led to the Rainbow project conducting a confidential survey, on behalf of the NICS, to gather information on the experience of NICS staff who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, and staff who are transgender. The survey launched late 2016 and it is expected that the findings will be available in early 2017 and will inform the development of a NICS LGBT action plan. Views have also been sought from colleagues in the Scottish government on their approach to LGBT staff networks. Further opportunities for networking with other external organisations are also being investigated.
- 8.3 The NICS Disability Working Group have conducted research on disability diversity in the NICS and prepared a report on their findings. The report explores three key areas namely recruitment, career development and management support. A number of recommendations arising from this research are currently under consideration.
- 8.4 During the reporting period work began on the development of an e-learning course on Unconscious Bias. The purpose of this course is to explain what Unconscious Bias is, how to recognise it and how to tackle it. It is hoped that work on this course will be completed and ready for launch in 2017.
- 8.5 There has been ongoing engagement with the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) sector outside of Government. The Mentoring Circles Initiative set up for women within the NICS have also been working well with two sessions completed to date. Plans are underway for further activities which complement the mentoring circles which will be open to all female G6/G7 in 2017 through a series of Conversations with a Purpose. The Permanent Secretary Group (PSG) has also set targets for gender - 45% female SCS by 2020 and 40% G2/G3 by 2023.

Work experience placements for People with Disabilities

- 8.6 The NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities launched in April 2016 accepting applications from Disability Organisations seeking structured work placements for their clients. Further information on the scheme, including a process map and application form, is available on the NICS Recruitment website.

8.7 From 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016, 33 applications were received for the scheme from the following Disability Organisations;

Disability Organisation	Number of Applications received
Action Mental Health (AMH)	6
AMH – New Horizons	4
AMH – Promote	2
Disability Action	2
Killadeas Day Care – Fresh Focus	1
MENCAP	2
Orchardville Society	2
Supported Employment Solutions (AMH)	3
The Cedar Foundation	9
The NOW Group	2
Total	33

8.8 These 33 applications resulted in 26 placements being agreed with Departments within this reporting period. In agreeing placements Corporate HR liaise 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)	9
for the Economy (DFE)	1
of Education (DE)	2
for Communities (DFC)	4

for Infrastructure (DFI)	3
of Finance (DOF)	4
of Health (DOH)	1
of Justice (DOJ)	1
The Executive Office (TEO)	0
Public Prosecution Service (PPS)	1
Total	26

- 8.9 Out of the 26 placements agreed, 9 did not proceed as the individual withdrew prior to the start date. There were various reasons for withdrawal e.g. gaining paid employment, accepting an alternative placement or ill health. 17 placements commenced successfully.
- 8.10 Process design ensures that feedback is requested for all participants of the scheme in the form of questionnaires. By the end of the year, 8 placements had been completed and feedback was received in respect of 6 of these. Initial results are positive from all participants of the scheme. Most notably 100% of individuals agreed that they would recommend the scheme to others and 100% of branches agreed that they thought the scheme was worthwhile and that staff involved were happy to contribute with the placement.
- 8.11 Whilst providing opportunities for people with disabilities to gain valuable work experience is the primary purpose of this scheme, the positive ripple effect extends beyond this. This scheme has led to a greater understanding of the needs of people with disabilities and helped to challenge any bias or preconceptions which may have existed in the work area, ultimately helping to remove barriers to employment for those with a disability. Working relationships within Corporate HR and a number of disability organisations have been strengthened. For example, due to ongoing engagement with Mencap, 2 senior members of the NICS attended a tour of Mencap's children and families centre in Newtownbreda. This led to Corporate HR staff becoming part of a team who worked for 2 days to help improve the gardens and create a safe play area for the children attending the centre. Increasing Corporate HR engagement with such external organisations creates opportunities to promote Diversity and Inclusion within the NICS.
- 8.12 Section 8 in this report gives a brief overview of some of the good work that is ongoing throughout the NICS in relation to Diversity and Inclusion. To recognise all

of the varied work that takes place across NICS departments, a new award category has been planned for the NICS live Event in 2017, the Diversity and Inclusion Award. The purpose of this award is two-fold – to recognise those who promote Diversity and Inclusion and to inspire others to action.

9. Audits

NI Civil Service Commissioners' Audits

9.1 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 2016. The NICS remains committed to positive and regular engagement with the Commissioners on the topics included in their Audit and Review Plan.

Selection and Assessment Methodologies

9.2 Commissioners' 2016/17 Audit & Review Plan included NICS selection and assessment methodologies as a topic for Commissioners to examine. In line with the Audit and Review Guidance, Commissioners decided that the approach they wished to adopt for examining this issue would be primarily via a themed discussion with Corporate HR.

9.3 During the course of this work Commissioners will consider the requirements of the Recruitment Code, including their expectations in relation to selection and assessment processes; re-visit the outcomes of the 2008 Selection Process audit with Corporate HR; and explore with Corporate HR key selection issues Commissioners' identified during their 2016 assessment and selection workshop with Fujitsu.

Evaluation of Recruitment and Selection Training

9.4 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 completed in June 2016 and the Commissioners highlighted three key observations as to where they thought the recruitment and selection training could be improved upon. The NICS is working with Commissioners to act on these observations to make the suggested improvements to recruitment and selection training.

Merit Lists - Review

- 9.5 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.
- 9.6 This review was undertaken in two parts:
Strand A towards the end of 2015/16, examined the policies and processes the NICS have 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 have extended merit lists beyond the expected closing date; and merit lists impacted by the 2014 recruitment embargo.
- 9.7 The Review of NICS Merit Lists completed in November 2016 and the key observations from the Review are being considered by NICS.

AccessNI Audit

- 9.8 In 2016, a representative from AccessNI visited Corporate HR to carry out a compliance audit. 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.
- 9.9 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;
 - Understanding and usage of information contained on Disclosure Certificates;
- 9.10 Following the onsite audit, AccessNI produced a written report detailing their findings. AccessNI found no areas in need of improvement and Corporate HR were found to be fully compliant on 12 February 2016.

10. Engagement with Stakeholders

10.1 During 2016, Resourcing and Appointments Division engaged with a number of key stakeholders and external organisations on a variety of issues, these included;

Diversity, Inclusivity and Equality of Opportunity

- The Equality Commission
- STEM Equality Network
- Disability Employment Service
- Health Advisory Service
- Irish Government – Public Appointments Service
- Action Mental Health (AMH)
- AMH – New Horizons
- AMH – Promote
- Disability Action
- Killadeas Day Care – Fresh Focus
- MENCAP
- Orchardville Society
- Supported Employment Solutions (AMH)
- The Cedar Foundation
- The NOW Group
- Acceptable Enterprises Ltd

Vetting

- UK Security Vetting
- AccessNI
- Representatives from the Ex-Prisoners Working Group

Resourcing

- Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland
- Civil Service Resourcing (UK)
- Central Procurement Directorate (CPD)
- Centre of Applied Learning (CAL)
- NIPSA
- First Division Association (FDA)
- NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)
- Irish Government – Public Appointments Service

Corporate Social Responsibility

- MENCAP HQ

11. Conclusion

11.1 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. This year has undoubtedly been a year of change for the NICS in terms of re-structuring and it is pleasing to note that an effective resourcing service continued to be delivered. There was also an increased focus on diversity and inclusion, recognising that only by identifying diverse talent can the NICS be better representative of NI society and responsive to the needs of all its citizens. Evidence provided supports the NICS position that all appointments must be made in accordance with the Merit Principle. The statements signed at Permanent Secretary Level this year are a welcome addition to this process and it is hoped this will provide further assurance both to our regulators and to the society we serve.

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

Reference	Title
IRC193933	Gas Safety Compliance Officer
IRC205199	Director, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) Unified Grade 5
IRC205280	Chief Inspector of Drinking Water - Principal Scientific Officer
IRC205323	Assistant Scientific Officer (ASO)
IRC206011	Deputy Health Assessment Advisor (Deputy Principal)
IRC206065	Deputy Registrar of Titles (Senior Principal Legal Officer)
IRC206066	Director of Digital Transformation
IRC206502	Deputy Secretary – Unified Grade 3 Food and Farming Group
IRC206924	Northern Ireland Executive ICT Placement Students
IRC207171	Reducing Offending Branch Grade 6
IRC207344	Departmental Chief Economist
IRC207494	Equine Instructor – Inspector Group 2
IRC207495	Land-based Engineering Instructor – Inspector Group 2 (2 posts)
IRC207754	Meat Inspector
IRC207935	Principal Inspector – Radioactive Substances Team (PSO/Grade 7)
IRC208176	Mechanical Engineering Assistant Higher Professional & Technical Officer (HPTO)
IRC208181	Occupational Health Professional
IRC209394	South Area Industrial Street Lighting Electrician
IRC209777	Fixed Term Executive Officer 2 (EO2)
IRC209977	SPTO Electrical Engineer
IRC209979	SPTO Mechanical Engineer
IRC210261	Principal Legal Officer (Grade 7)
IRC210358	SPTO Construction Health and Safety Advisor
IRC210479	Principal Occupational Health Nurse (Grade 7)
IRC210584	Internal Auditor - Staff Officer
IRC210661	Staff Officer Accountant
IRC210682	Deputy Principal Economist
IRC210811	Architecture (RIBA Part 1) Placement Student
IRC211548	Eastern Area – Industrial Road Worker 2
IRC211598	Strategic HR Director (Grade 3)
IRC211706	Permanent Secretary DE
IRC211933	Night Support Worker
IRC211964	Head of Criminal Investigations, Environmental Crime Unit (G7)
IRC211986	Driving Examiner
IRC212011	Inspector of Mathematics (Unified Grade 6)
IRC212061	Mapping and Charting Officer
IRC212145	Senior Medical Officer (Screening, Maternal and Child Health) (Grade 5)
IRC212146	Senior Medical Officer Health Protection
IRC212207	Vehicle Examiner (Technical Grade 1)
IRC212243	Night Manager (EOI)
IRC212329	Inspector of Primary Education (Unified Grade 6)
IRC212330	Inspector of Science (Unified Grade 6)

IRC212472	Chief Industrial & Radiochemical Inspector (Senior Principal, Grade 6)
IRC212499	Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service
IRC212616	Compliance Officer
IRC212784	Information Communication Technology (ICT) Apprentices
IRC212789	Graduate Trainee Civil Engineer
IRC213068	Assistant Statistician
IRC213162	Pharmaceutical Officer
IRC213169	Director - Health Projects Division, Central Procurement Directorate
IRC213288	Director - Reducing Offending Directorate (Grade 3)

Appendix 2 – Summary of application and updated appointment figures 2013 - 2015

Table 1 – Summary of applications received 2013 – 2015 by Equality Group

Equality Category	Description	2013	2014	2015
Overall	<i>Total</i>	31,205	6,192	4,579
Gender	<i>Male</i>	16,537 ¹	3,567 ²	2,824
	<i>Female</i>	14,650	2,620	1,755
Community Background	<i>Protestant</i>	14,425	2,526	2,696
	<i>Catholic</i>	14,618	3,229	1,323
	<i>Not Determined</i>	2,162	437	560
Ethnicity	<i>White</i>	30,796 ³	6,068 ⁴	4,512
	<i>Minority Ethnic Groups</i>	381	114	67
Disability	<i>With a declared disability</i>	911	206	110
	<i>Without a declared disability</i>	30,294	5,986	4,469
Age-group	<i>16-24</i>	10,427 ⁵	1,755 ⁶	1,519 ⁷
	<i>25-39</i>	15,570	3,280	2,191
	<i>40-49</i>	3,544	777	609
	<i>50+</i>	1,660	377	260
Sexual Orientation	<i>Both sexes / same sex</i>	1,180 ⁸	222 ⁹	243
	<i>Different sex</i>	29,982	5,966	4,336
NICS employment history	<i>Current</i>	2,443 ¹⁰	571 ¹¹	104 ¹²
	<i>Previous</i>	2,795	292	53
	<i>None</i>	19,525	2,742	748

¹ Gender information missing for 18 applicants

² Gender information missing for 5 applicants

³ Ethnicity information missing for 28 applicants

⁴ Ethnicity information missing for 10 applicants

⁵ Based on age at closing date for applications. Age missing / invalid for 4 applicants

⁶ Based on age at closing date for applications. Age missing / invalid for 3 applicants

⁷ Based on age at closing date for applications

⁸ Sexual orientation information missing for 43 applicants

⁹ Sexual orientation information missing for 4 applicants

¹⁰ NICS employment history missing for 6,442 applicants

¹¹ NICS employment history missing for 2,587 applicants

¹² NICS employment history missing for 3,674 applicants

Table 2 – Summary of updated appointments received 2013 – 2015 by Equality Group

Equality Category	Description	2013			2014			2015		
		'Expected' Appointees	Actual Appointees	Difference (Actual minus 'Expected')	'Expected' Appointees	Actual Appointees	Difference (Actual minus 'Expected')	'Expected' Appointees	Actual Appointees	Difference (Actual minus 'Expected')
Overall	Total	1,037	1,037	0	169	169	0	181	181	0
Gender	Male	586	583	-3	127	109	18	118	123	5
	Female	450	454	4	42	60	-18	63	58	-5
Community Background	Protestant	458	511	53	71	64	-7	102	97	-5
	Catholic	496	452	-44	83	98	15	57	51	-6
	Not Determined	83	74	-9	14	7	-7	22	33	11
Ethnicity	White	1,020	1,027	7	166	#	#	178	181	3
	Minority Ethnic Groups	15	10	-5	3	*	#	3	0	-3
Disability	With a declared disability	27	17	-10	3	*	#	5	7	2
	Without a declared disability	1,010	1,020	10	166	#	#	176	174	-2
Age-group	16-24	310	298 ¹³	-12	44	47	3	69	59	-10
	25-39	523	591	68	75	70	-5	80	95	15
	40-49	138	103	-35	31	38	7	22	21	-1
	50+	66	44	-22	19	14	-5	10	6	-4
Sexual Orientation	Both sexes / same sex	35	43 ¹⁴	8	3	5	2	10	8	-2
	Different sex	998	993	-5	166	164	-2	171	173	2
NICS employment history	Current	125	185 ¹⁵	60	17	27 ¹⁶	10	4	10 ¹⁷	6
	Previous	103	105	2	9	10	1	3	3	0
	None	684	634	-50	140	128	-12	44	48	4

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)

¹³ Based on age at closing date for applications. Age missing / invalid for 1 appointee

¹⁴ Sexual orientation information missing for 1 appointee

¹⁵ NICS employment history missing for 113 appointees

¹⁶ NICS employment history missing for 4 appointees

¹⁷ NICS employment history missing for 120 appointees

Table 3 – Percentage summary of application and updated appointment figures 2013 – 2015 by equality group

Equality Category	Description	% Applications			% Actual Appointments		
		2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Gender	Male	53	58	62	56	64	68
	Female	47	42	38	44	36	32
Community Background	Protestant	46	41	59	49	38	54
	Catholic	47	52	29	44	58	28
	Not Determined	7	7	12	7	4	18
Ethnicity	White	99	98	99	99	#	100
	Minority Ethnic Groups	1	2	1	1	*	0
Disability	With a declared disability	3	3	2	2	*	4
	Without a declared disability	97	97	98	98	#	96
Age-group	16-24	33	28	33	29	28	33
	25-39	50	53	48	57	41	52
	40-49	11	13	13	10	22	12
	50+	5	6	6	4	8	3
Sexual Orientation	Both sexes / same sex	4	4	5	4	3	4
	Different sex	96	96	95	96	97	96
NICS employment history	Current	8	9	2	18	16	6
	Previous	9	5	1	10	6	2
	None	63	44	16	61	76	27

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)