

RECRUITMENT TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2010

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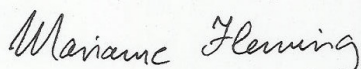
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FOREWORD

I am pleased to publish this report from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) on recruitment competitions to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) for 2010. The report includes a summary on recruitment of staff to the Northern Ireland Civil Service during the period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010 and provides a hyperlink to information and data on recruitment activity published by the Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency (NISRA). It also covers initiatives taken by Resourcing Division in DFP Corporate HR to improve upon recruitment policies and procedures and to promote the NICS as an employer of choice.

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, in compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. It has also been agreed that, with effect from 2010, the reporting period will be on a calendar year basis. This move away from reporting on a financial year basis means that there is an overlap in this 2010 report with information published last year relating to the period 1 January 2010 to 31 March 2010.

The year had been particularly challenging with Departments continuing to reduce staffing numbers to remain within their budgetary allocations agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive. This had a direct impact on the level of external recruitment as the embargo on promotion and recruitment to administrative General Service Grades (AA – Grade 6 inclusive) that was introduced in February 2010 continued during the remainder of the reporting period. The embargo was implemented to maximise opportunities to redeploy surplus staff in the NICS and good progress was achieved in this regard throughout the year. Notwithstanding the embargo on recruitment of general administrative staff, many areas of the NICS continued to recruit specialist grades throughout this reporting period to meet their business needs.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marianne Fleming". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Resourcing Division Corporate HR

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The filling of vacancies in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) through external recruitment is managed in line with best practice outlined in the Codes of Practice of the Equality Commission and in accordance with the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code. Procedures are in place to ensure that selection and appointment are made in accordance with the four principles set out in the Recruitment Code. Policies and practices are subject to internal monitoring and are updated regularly, taking account of best practice and any changes in legislation. They are also subject to external audit conducted on behalf of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners. Departments' adherence to the principles in the Recruitment Code are reviewed regularly by their Human Resource managers. Resourcing Division in Corporate HR in the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) is responsible for overall workforce planning in the NICS and for policy in relation to recruitment to the NICS. It carries out regular monitoring of service standards achieved by HRConnect, our service delivery partners.
- 1.2 HRConnect was the means of appointing staff through external recruitment used by departments during the reporting period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010, with the exception of the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Youth Justice Agency. These agencies became part of the Department of Justice from 12 April 2010. Both agencies have systems in place to ensure that recruitment is carried out on the basis of merit in fair and open competition.

2 Recruitment Activity

- 2.1 Over the period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010, 65 recruitment competitions for permanent NICS jobs were held. The total number of valid applications received was 5,434. By 1 May 2011, a total of 79 appointments had been made from 52 of these competitions, while no appointments had been made from the remaining 13 competitions.

Over the period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010, 12 recruitment competitions for temporary or fixed-term NICS jobs were held. The total number of valid

applications received was 6,331. By 1 May 2011, a total of 73 appointments had been made from 10 of these competitions while no appointments had been made from the remaining 2 competitions.

Further details of the competitions summarised can be obtained in the NISRA publication 'Analysis of Recruitment Competitions 1 April 2009 – 31 December 2010', which can be accessed on the NISRA website at [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 01Apr09 - 31Dec10.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Analysis_of_NICS_Recruitment_Competitions_01Apr09_-_31Dec10.pdf)

3. Corporate Recruitment Competitions

- 3.1 Due to the embargo on recruitment to general service grades that was in place for most of 2010 Resourcing Division did not initiate any corporate led recruitment competitions. As a further consequence of the embargo, Resourcing Division did not attend any promotional careers events/fairs or engage in other activities to encourage under represented groups in this reporting period. A number of initiatives were introduced or continued with the aim of promoting the NICS as an employer of choice and these are reported in Section 7.

NI Fast Stream Scheme

- 3.2 In 2010 the NICS participated in the Fast Stream recruitment competition organised by the Cabinet Office. The recruitment figures provided in NISRA's publication 'Analysis of Recruitment Competitions 1 April 2009 – 31 December 2010' contains data on the applications for the Fast Stream competition. The Fast Stream Scheme aims to recruit high quality graduates with excellent potential who will be appointed at Staff Officer level and who will be developed and managed to fulfil their potential as future leaders in the Civil Service. Fast Streamers will have an opportunity to be assessed for Grade 7 posts after 2 years. The NICS will appoint up to 6 Fast Streamers from the 2010 competition during 2011.

4. Departmental Recruitment under Regulation 3

- 4.1 Regulation 3 of the Commissioners' General Regulations 2005 permits appointments to be made in particular circumstances other than in accordance with the merit principle. Details of appointments made by departments under Regulation 3 are as follows:

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

Department/Agency	Numbers
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	1
Department of Justice	26
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	2

The high number of secondments to the Department of Justice is due to individuals being seconded from the Northern Ireland Office to DOJ post devolution of Policing and Justice on the 12 April 2010.

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

Department/Agency	Numbers
Department of Justice	842

These staff transferred from the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service by statutory transfer upon devolution of Policing and Justice on 12 April 2010.

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

None

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

None

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

None

Reg 3. (f) - Where the person has previously held a situation in the Civil Service and has been considered for reinstatement [Commissioners' General Regulations 2007, with effect from 1 February 2007]

None

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

5. Recruiting People with Disabilities

- 5.1 During 2010 there were 34 requests from job applicants with disabilities for reasonable adjustments in the selection and appointment process. All requests which were identified were met. The adjustments provided included extra time to complete tests, sign language facilitators, large print, specific seating and car parking arrangements.

6. Audits

Audit of the Effectiveness of Recruitment and Selection Training.

- 6.1 In 2009 the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners arranged for an audit on the Effectiveness of Recruitment and Selection Training. The audit made a number of recommendations to the NICS on a range of issues relating to training. These included recommendations to ensure consistent level of understanding of all critical aspects of the wider recruitment and selection cycle, promoting a greater appreciation of key roles and responsibilities, including the responsibilities of HR Connect in the recruitment process, strengthening skills in developing job and person specifications and effective eligibility and short-listing criteria and the development of timely and effective training and refresher training in practical skills and knowledge. During 2010 Resourcing Division developed a formal action plan to address the key issues from the audit and to implement agreed recommendations. This has included working with the NICS Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) to develop a training programme for HR staff to develop a better understanding of and approach to job analysis and to facilitate a more strategic overview of and approach to recruitment and selection. This Strategic Recruitment Training programme was piloted in August 2010 with senior HR professionals from several departments. A one day module, targeted specifically at training selection panel members, was also developed and was attended by Civil Service Commissioners in October 2010.
- 6.2 In response to recommendations made in the Effectiveness of Training audit Resourcing Division also held a series of workshops in August and September 2010 to ascertain the level of understanding among the key stakeholders of roles and responsibilities within the NICS recruitment process. The workshop held in September 2010 focused on recruitment and was attended by senior civil servants. The Civil Service Commissioners were also in attendance. Feedback from the

workshops was extremely positive with participants commenting that they promoted a shared understanding of various roles within the recruitment process. The roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the recruitment process was also published in Version 11 of the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual.

Management Arrangements for Recruitment to the NICS

- 6.3 A further audit commenced in 2010 to look at management arrangements in recruitment to the NICS. This audit was not completed during the reporting period.

AccessNI Audit

- 6.4 Appointments and Marketing Branch within Resourcing Division is registered with AccessNI as a responsible and registered body to allow the processing of basic, standard and enhanced clearances for appointments made through HRConnect to the NICS.

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 considers that these checks can be carried out either by way of visiting with the Registered Body, or by Registered Body Self Assessment.

- 6.5 Resourcing Division completed a Self Assessment during the reporting period. As a result AccessNI deemed it unnecessary to carry out a full compliance visit. A meeting of Resourcing Division and HRConnect with AccessNI in September 2010 confirmed that NICS policies and practices were fully compliant with AccessNI's Code of Practice.

7. Promotion of Careers in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Queen's University Belfast Internship Programme

- 7.1 Resourcing Division continued to work with Queen's University to initiate a placement programme for interns (in their penultimate year) from the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy to positions within the NICS. The programme helps to promote the NICS as an employer of choice among future graduates. The 2010/2011 programme saw 2 successful interns allocated to

projects in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). The intern working in DETI commenced the placement in September 2010 whilst the intern with DEL is due to commence in January 2011. 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 an acquired range of skills including team working.

- 7.2 It is planned that intern opportunities for Queen's University students will also be made available next year with those studying for the Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) degree being eligible to apply to this programme.

Work Experience

- 7.3 The NICS recognises that even though the Civil Service is currently reducing in size, it is still very important that young people should be given the opportunity to benefit from work experience opportunities within our large and diverse workforce. We welcome applications for work experience opportunities from all schools and colleges providing education to young people undergoing their statutory education. We will do all we can to facilitate these applications. Information on the NICS work experience policy can be accessed through our website www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk as well as the application forms to be used for each request. From March 2010 to 31 December 2010, 226 applications were received for work experience across the various departments in the NICS. Resourcing Division worked in partnership with all departments to place 143 individuals into work experience positions.

Programme-led Apprenticeships

- 7.4 The Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme is an intervention measure introduced by DEL in September 2009, designed to assist young people who have aspirations towards skills training but who have been unable to find employment during the economic downturn. The programme is based around existing apprenticeship frameworks, and an important aspect of the programme is that participants have the opportunity to work towards the relevant NVQ element of the apprenticeship framework. This is achieved through an employer placement which compliments and builds on the occupational skills acquired in directed training and

a simulated working environment. In the current guidelines for the programme, this is achieved through a 1 day per week placement with an employer. Whilst this initiative generated considerable support from NICS departments, which submitted a number of bids to DEL, the resultant number of apprentice placements was disappointing with only 4 apprentices placed in NICS by December 2010. We will continue to work with DEL to support the initiative and to increase levels of participation.

Steps to Work

- 7.5 'Steps to Work' is the main adult return to work programme for the unemployed and economically inactive in Northern Ireland. In January 2010 Sir Reg Empey, the then Minister for Employment and Learning, wrote to Executive colleagues regarding the involvement of the public sector in the Steps to Work programme. To encourage the participation of departments and the wider public sector in the Steps to Work programme, Resourcing Division liaised with colleagues in DEL to initiate in August 2010 a NICS Pilot Scheme for Steps to Work within DEL's Employment Services Division. There will be a formal evaluation of the success of the pilot initiative in 2011 with a view to deciding the way forward in extending placements to other NICS departments.

8. Improvements to Services

HRConnect

- 8.1 Resourcing Division continues to work in partnership with HRConnect to ensure that an effective recruitment service is provided to all NICS departments. The Division provides advice and guidance to HRConnect on NICS recruitment policy through regular engagement. Resourcing Division is also responsible for formal monthly monitoring of the service level provided by HRConnect in delivering recruitment services to departments, and raising any shortfall with colleagues in Enterprise Shared Services who are responsible for overall contract management for HRConnect.

Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual

- 8.2 The NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual was reviewed during this reporting period with Version 11 being published in November 2010. The manual was reformatted to improve significantly the ease of access to information on key

aspects of recruitment and to provide clarity on respective roles and responsibilities in the recruitment process. Improvements were made to document control and the integration of information relating to recruitment to the Senior Civil Service (SCS). The manual can be accessed on the NICS Recruitment Website at

<https://irecruit-ext.hrconnect.nigov.net/resources/documents/v/1/1//v11.pdf>

Determining Suitability for Contractor Staff to be employed in the NICS

- 8.3 Resourcing Division had full responsibility for assessing the suitability of contractors who have "unspent" criminal convictions and are seeking employment on a NICS contract. We continued to work with colleagues in DFP's Central Procurement Directorate to manage 212 cases during 2010.

Strategic Resourcing

- 8.4 During 2010 the NICS developed a Framework for Flexible and Effective Resourcing. The main drivers for strengthening our strategic approach to resourcing included the challenging efficiency targets set for departments within the Northern Ireland Executive's Budget and Investment Strategies, rising public and political expectation of NICS's delivery of service, the changing nature of work in the Civil Service and external factors such as changes in the wider labour market.
- 8.5 The overall aim of this approach is to have well informed, flexible and effective resourcing that supports the NICS and departmental business. This will be achieved by integrating resource planning with financial and business planning, demonstrating the HR implications and impact of changing circumstances, providing a strategic view of resourcing challenges and supporting intelligent decision making to meet resourcing needs.
- 8.6 A Strategic Resourcing Board comprising departmental and corporate HR representatives and NISRA was established to develop and oversee the development and implementation of a Strategic Resource Plan for the NICS to cover the period up to 2015. The Strategic Resource Plan, when agreed, will include, amongst other matters, strategic decisions for recruitment.