

Labour Relations Agency
Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

Revised September 2015

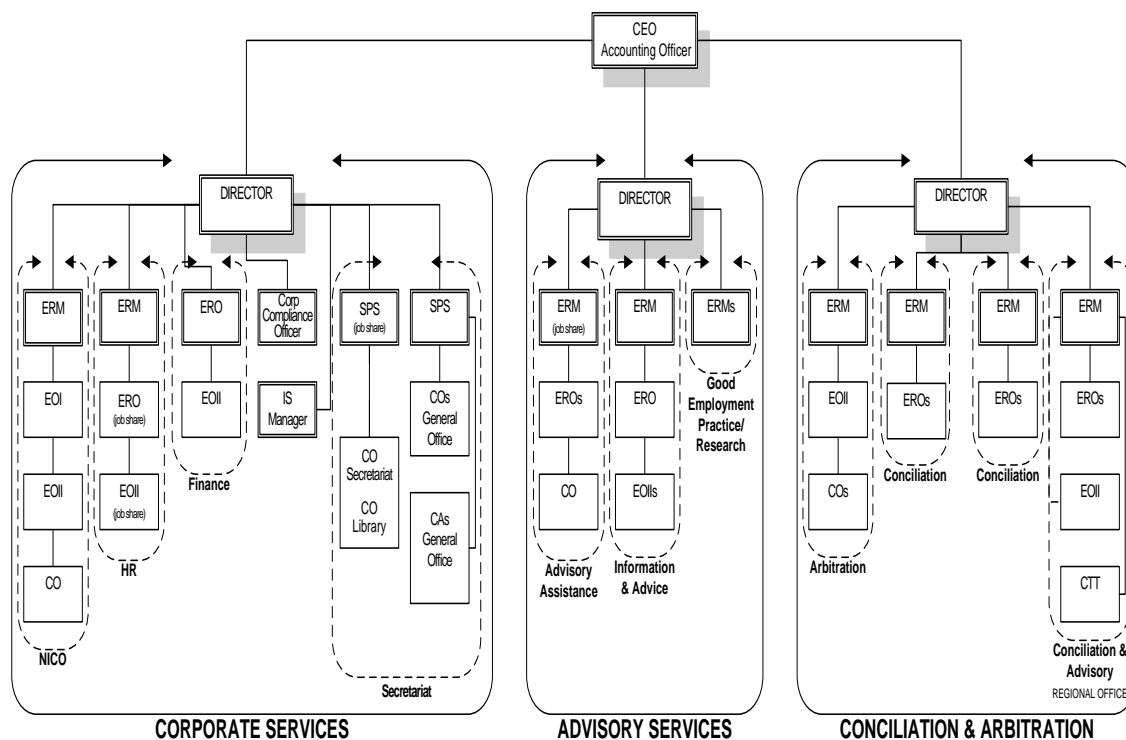
1. Introduction

- 1.1 Welcome to the Labour Relations Agency Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, which has been produced under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).
- 1.2 The Act gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities from January 2005, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. It requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which will detail types of information to be made routinely available. Each publication scheme must set out the classes of information contained within the scheme.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Agency Publication Scheme, in compliance with the Act, is to inform you:
- About the classes of information that we publish or intend to publish;
 - How this information can be accessed; and
 - Whether it is available free of charge or on payment.

2. Background information about the Labour Relations Agency

- 2.1 The Labour Relations Agency (the Agency) was established in 1976 as a Non-Departmental Public Body with responsibility for promoting the improvement of employment relations in Northern Ireland. The Agency is independent of Government and is funded in the form of a grant from the Department for the Economy (DfE).
- 2.2 The Agency provides an impartial and confidential employment relations service to those engaged in industry, commerce and the public services sector. The Agency's services include the provision of advice on good employment practices and assistance with the development and implementation of employment policies and procedures. The Agency is also active in resolving disputes through its conciliation, mediation and arbitration services.
- 2.3 The policy of the Agency is determined by a Board consisting of a part-time Chairperson and nine other members appointed by DfE. Members of the Agency's Board are appointed on the basis of their knowledge of, and experience in, employment relations. The Board normally comprises members from employers' bodies, trade unions or those who have a relevant academic or employment law background.
- 2.4 The Agency is managed by a senior management team consisting of the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, and the Director of Advisory services. Each Director is supported by staff on grades analogous to the Northern Ireland Civil Service grades, ranging from Administrative Assistant to Employment Relations Manager (the Civil Service Deputy Principal grade).

LRA ORGANISATIONAL CHART



3. Legislative functions, services and activities of the Labour Relations Agency

3.1 The Labour Relations Agency was established in 1976 under the provision of the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1796 and its role and functions were confirmed by the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

3.2 The Agency's primary remit is its statutory duty to promote the improvement of industrial relations. This includes the following specific functions:

- **Dispute Resolution** – where the Agency anticipates that a dispute may occur it may take all steps which it considers appropriate for its mitigation;
- **Claims to the Industrial and/or Fair Employment Tribunal** – it is the duty of the Agency to endeavour to promote a settlement of a tribunal application without the need for a determination by an Employment/Fair Employment Tribunal. A similar duty exists where a person claims that action has been taken in respect of which proceedings *could* be brought before a tribunal but no application has yet been lodged;
- **Arbitration** The Agency was given the power to introduce the Scheme by the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, as amended, and the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. Subsequently, the Scheme has been established by means of the Labour Relations Agency Arbitration Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2012. The Scheme provides a voluntary alternative to a tribunal for the resolution of claims that could be the subject of proceedings before an Industrial Tribunal and/or the Fair Employment Tribunal;

- **Collective conciliation** – Collective Conciliation is facilitated or assisted negotiation where an Agency conciliator helps employers and employees (normally via trade unions) to try to reach mutually acceptable settlements of their collective disputes. We do not impose outcomes or make judgements on the rights or wrongs of the matter in dispute. There is no compulsion to use collective conciliation and any agreement is voluntarily entered into by the parties.
- **Collective bargaining** - the Agency may assist with arrangements for the conduct of collective bargaining and may make recommendations to trade unions, employers and employers’ associations concerning the introduction of arrangements for the conduct of collective bargaining or the improvement of existing arrangements.
- **Mediation** - Mediation works by using a neutral Labour Relations Agency mediator to assist parties involved in a workplace conflict or dispute to reach a satisfactory solution to workplace disputes that both sides are able to agree to. We do not impose a solution or make judgements on the rights or wrongs of the issues in dispute; we simply try to help you settle your differences on your own terms.
- **Notification of procedural agreements** – the Agency may request an employer to submit to it copies, or particulars, of procedural agreements to which he or she is a part and may receive and record such procedural agreements or particulars thereof.
- **Employment relations advice** – it may, on request or otherwise, give employers’, employers’ associations, workers, employees and trade unions such advice as it thinks appropriate on matters concerned with, affecting or likely to affect industrial relations.
- **Codes of Practice** – it may issue Codes of Practice containing such practical guidance as the Agency thinks fit for the purpose of promoting the improvement of industrial relations.
- **Industrial Relations Training** – the Agency may review arrangements for industrial relations training in Northern Ireland and provide advice to employers, employers’ organisations, trade unions and the DfE on training needs.
- **Industrial Relations Research** – it may conduct research into any question relating to industrial relations generally or to industrial relations in any particular industry or in any particular undertaking or part of an undertaking.

4. Partnership Working

4.1 The Board of the Agency ensures that the Agency fulfils its role as part of the Northern Ireland economic and social infrastructure by partnering with other stakeholders such as:

Department for the Economy (DfE)	The Agency’s sponsoring government department
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)	Partnership working
Northern Ireland Certification Officer	The Agency is responsible under Article 69 of the 1992 Order for providing the NI Certification Officer with finance and business support services which in no way affects the Certification Officer's independence of both the Agency and its sponsor, the DfE.
Invest Northern Ireland (INI)	Partnership working
Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI)	Partnership working
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service (ACAS)	Partnership working
Office of the Industrial Tribunal & Fair Employment Tribunal (OITFET)	Partnership working
Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)	Partnership working

Northern Ireland Committee - Irish Congress of Trades Unions (NIC-ICTU)	Partnership working
Northern Ireland Roundtable on Employment Relations	<p>Partnership working</p> <p>The Roundtable comprises a representative of the four lead employer organisations (Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of British industry, Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors) and four representatives from the Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions). The Roundtable is chaired by the Chair of the Labour Relations Agency and the Agency facilitates the work of the group.</p> <p>The core purpose of the Northern Ireland Employment Relations Roundtable is: ‘To be the principal advocate in promoting the strategic importance of strong and equitable Employment Relationships and Industrial Relations which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the success of businesses; • Improves the experience of employees/workers; • Encourages collaborative partnerships between employees and their employers and • Enhances Northern Ireland’s economic competitiveness and social wellbeing.’
HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)	Partnership working

5. Board and Senior Management Team

5.1 For more information on the Board members see “About Us” section on www.lra.org.uk for the names of and biographies on the current Board Members.

5.2 The Senior Management Team comprises:

Tom Evans - Chief Executive
Don Leeson - Director of Corporate Services
Penny Holloway - Director of Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
David McGrath - Director of Advisory Services

6. LRA Offices

Headquarters	Regional Office
Labour Relations Agency 2-16 Gordon Street Belfast BT1 2LG T: 02890 321442 E: info@lra.org.uk	Labour Relations Agency 1-3 Guildhall Street Londonderry BT48 6BB T: 02871 269639 E: info@lra.org.uk

7. What we spend and how we spend it

- 7.1 All financial information relating to income, expenditure, procurement, Staff and Board members' allowances and expenses can be found at:
<https://www.lra.org.uk/publications/agency-publications/corporate-matters/annual-reports-and-accounts/labour-relations-agency-annual-report-accounts-2016-17>

8. What are our priorities and how we are doing

- 8.1 The Agency is committed to meeting whatever challenges emerge from the DfE reviews of employment law. There is always a need to explore more innovative ways of presenting and delivering services and the Agency will continue to engage with our stakeholders on an individual and collective basis to ensure that our programmes and services continue to meet the needs of both employees and employers.
- 8.2 Good employment relations in the workplace is essential to workforce harmony and contributes to the success of the enterprise enhances the experience of the employee and the customer whilst impacting positively on the economy and indeed society as a whole. The Agency is committed to ensure that all parties in the workplace know and understand the role of the Agency and can access its services in order to achieve good employment relations.
- 8.3 The Agency will continue to work closely with organisations at a regional, national and international level in the exercise of its statutory obligations building relationships and learning from best practice whilst raising the profile of the Agency for the benefit of all those it serves.

9. Charges & Fees

- 9.1 Information available on our website www.lra.org.uk is available free of charge
- 9.2 All requests for written information under our the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme may be provided free, however requests for archived copies of documents no longer on the website may attract a charge for the cost of retrieval, plus photocopy and postage costs etc.

10. Lists and Registers

- 10.1 The Agency hold anonymised lists and registers of:

- Gifts and Hospitality
- Registers of Interests for Staff and Board Member
- Disclosure Log of Data Protection Act (Subject Access Requests)
- Customer Complaints
- Freedom of Information Complaints

11. Classes of Information available under this Publication Scheme

Anonymised Lists and Registers (see 10.1)	Advice & Guidance Leaflets	Codes of Practice	Advisory information notes, leaflets and booklets
Consultation Responses	Services standards (operational guidelines)	Service Level Agreements/Memorandum of Understanding	Board Papers referenced in Board Minutes
Annual Report and Accounts	Disclosure Logs	Corporate Plans	Business Plans
Recruitment, Selection & Induction	Human Resources Policies & Procedures	Information Security Management Standards	Code of Best Practice for Board Members
Conciliation, Mediation and Advisory Leaflets and booklets	Management Statement and Financial Memorandum	Financial and Operating Procedures	Corporate and Business Plans
Senior Management Team Minutes	Data Protection Policy & Procedure	Customer Complaints Policy & Procedure	Equality Scheme
Equal Opportunities Policy	Codes of Conduct for Staff and Board	Fraud Policy	Health and Safety Policy
Annual Equality Scheme Progress Report	Governance Statement	Board Members Biographies	Names and contact details of the Senior Management Team
Board Minutes	Board Papers	Board Sub-Committee Minutes	Procurement Policy & Procedure

12. Complaints

If you are not satisfied with the way we have dealt with a request you may follow our complaints procedure which can be found at <https://www.lra.org.uk/publications/agency-publications/corporate-matters/customer-complaints-policy-and-procedure/>.

12.1 Complaints may be made to:

Email: Customer.Complaints@lra.org.uk

By writing to: Customer Complaints Officer
Labour Relations Agency
2-16 Gordon Street
Belfast
BT1 2LG

12.2 If you are dissatisfied with any subsequent response you may write to the the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) <https://nipso.org.uk/nipso>
The purpose of NIPSO is to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland are served by a fair and efficient public administration that is committed to accountability, openness and quality of service.

12.3 In addition you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) by emailing ni@ico.org.uk who may investigate the matter. The Information Commissioner will expect you to have tried to resolve the matter through our internal customer complaints policy and procedure. As well as operating an advice service to address general enquiries on Data Protection and Freedom of Information, it promotes good practice on information rights by raising awareness of organizational responsibilities across all sectors.