

CSC NI

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

21-22

ANNUAL REPORT

Ensuring appointment on merit and supporting ethical standards

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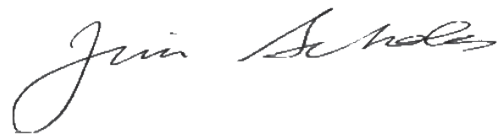
We, Your Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners
for Northern Ireland, present to Your Majesty
this Report on our work during the period
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022



Deirdre Toner
Chairperson



Sinéad Burns



Jim Scholes

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CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



Jim Scholes, Commissioner Deirdre Toner, Chairperson Sinéad Burns, Commissioner

As guardians of merit, we uphold the principle that selection for appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) should be on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition. Our Recruitment Code interprets the Merit Principle and applies it to the NICS recruitment process.

Our auditing of this process encourages confidence in recruitment procedures and helps ensure the most suitable candidate is appointed. We also have an independent role in hearing appeals from civil servants under the Code of Ethics to support the Civil Service core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



I am delighted to present this Annual Report on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland. At the outset, I would like to thank my fellow Commissioners, Jim Scholes and Sinéad Burns, for their continued support and assistance during a busy and often challenging 2021/22.

Thanks also go to the Secretariat, including John Murphy whose secondment ended on 31 March 2022. Like many others across Northern Ireland, the Secretariat has continued to deliver effective and efficient support services flexibly. A second year of Covid-19 restrictions served to further embed a hybrid way of working as the norm and the economic impact of the pandemic has resulted in many in the public sector, including the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners (OCSC), being required to make significant savings and to deliver more with less.

While working from home continues to be the default position for our staff, it is great for Commissioners and the Secretariat to be able to come together again as a team in the office and enjoy the human interaction which makes us all more creative and productive. In February 2022, the OCSC moved to bright new offices at Erskine House in Belfast city centre along with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), its sponsor body, after many years at Stormont House.

While terms such as “lockdown”, “furlough” and “social distancing” are much less frequently used today, the pandemic has left an indelible mark on our society, our public services and our economy. As Northern Ireland sets out on its journey to recovery, there are other challenges facing it including the absence of a functioning NI Assembly, the war in Ukraine and the ripple effect of that on the rest of the world. Closer to home and affecting all of us is the cost of living crisis, the most recent challenge to form the backdrop for the delivery of public services.

Strong and effective leadership is of course critical in Northern Ireland, where change and challenges are constant and flexibility, resilience and innovation (all of which have been witnessed in abundance in the past two years) are key to successful delivery of public services.

During the year, as part of the delivery of their statutory duties to uphold the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, Commissioners chaired a number of competitions which resulted in 52 appointments at Grade 5 and above to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). These included high profile campaigns to select a new Head of the Civil Service and three Permanent Secretaries.

This leads me to reflect on the significant changes which have taken place in the leadership of the NICS in the past year. Dr Jayne Brady took up her appointment as Head of the Civil Service (HOCS) in September 2021, taking over from Interim HOCS, Jenny Pyper. Dr Brady

is the first woman to fill the role on a permanent basis and, in addition, she was appointed from outside of the NICS establishment. In the months that followed, there were further changes to the NICS Board with several new Permanent Secretaries being appointed, others moving departments, the Executive Office reorganised and new strategic posts being introduced.

While this is an exciting development, on behalf of Commissioners I would like to pay tribute to the Interim HOCS and to those Permanent Secretaries who retired or left office in 2021/22 for their most valuable contribution to the NICS and public service generally in Northern Ireland in often challenging and difficult circumstances. Commissioners look forward to strengthening their working relationships with the NICS and the NICS Board in the year ahead and contributing, in whatever way possible within their statutory remit, to the transformation agenda of the NICS.

I would also like to reflect on the various reports and their recommendations published since the beginning of 2020 which collectively drove the recruitment and selection agenda forward at pace in the NICS, resulting in new levels of engagement and focused activity between Commissioners and their NICS colleagues.

The New Decade New Approach Deal, which provided the basis for the restoration of the devolved institutions in 2020, aspired to introduce an *“ambitious package of measures to strengthen transparency and governance arrangements”*.

The Report on the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme, published in March 2020, set the scene for improvements to further governance and good practice reforms across the NICS. This included improvements in the area of raising concerns.

The RHI Report also identified the need for *“a fundamental shift... in the approach used within the Northern Ireland Civil Service... to recruitment and selection for Government jobs...”* which would lead towards *“more job-specific recruitment and selection which must, of course, be fair, transparent and consistent with relevant employment legislation”*.

On 1 February 2022, the Department of Finance (DoF) published a revised NICS Code of Ethics. Commissioners, given their statutory function of considering and determining appeals made to them by a civil servant, responded by revising and streamlining their guidance on raising a concern under the NICS Code of Ethics.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS was published in November 2020, identifying key findings and making recommendations under seven headings, including resourcing.

Commissioners acknowledged the NIAO Report’s recommendation under the heading *“Review of Resourcing”* that *“the NICS and the Civil Service Commissioners should work in partnership, taking account of how other models operate, to explore how they can best support the delivery of the transformation agenda and the changes needed to reform the recruitment and selection process throughout the NICS.”*

While Commissioners have long enjoyed a positive and productive relationship with colleagues in Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources (NICSHR) and the wider NICS, this recommendation provided the impetus to both formalise working arrangements and galvanise a sense of common purpose.

The result was the setting up of a Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group to focus on and deliver agreed outputs specific to the transformation agenda.

The Group initially met in December 2021 and has collaborated regularly since then to review existing recruitment and selection policy; explore and learn from other operating models; discuss emerging recruitment and selection policy; promote equality of opportunity for all; maintain the Merit Principle in all recruitment and selection processes and identify appropriate use of Exceptions to Merit. Its work has gathered momentum and Commissioners are pleased to have had the opportunity to support, meaningfully contribute to, debate and shape policy in relation to:

- the wider introduction of apprenticeship schemes in the NICS, acknowledging that they do not constitute an exception to the merit principle;
- a more flexible approach to the length of inward secondments to the NICS;
- schemes to improve access to the NICS for people with a disability; and
- Government programmes and initiatives to meet skills gaps in the NICS and to target under-represented groups, with a view to making the NICS an employer of choice which is representative in its diversity of the society it serves.

Commissioners have invested considerable time in amending their Recruitment Code to accommodate a broader range of pathways to employment in the NICS, while ensuring that the Merit Principle is upheld throughout. We consider this to have been time well spent and we hope to publish our updated Recruitment Code early in Summer 2022.

I believe it is worth noting that the work of the Recruitment and Selection Transformation group is discreet from other audit and engagement work regularly undertaken by Commissioners and NICSHR in the discharge of Commissioners' statutory functions. This important work is described in more detail within the body of this Annual Report.

In 2021/22, the Secretariat further built on its relationship with colleagues in the UK Civil Service Commission, sharing ideas and experience in the pursuit of best practice. This is proving to be mutually beneficial.

Finally, in taking forward their statutory duty to safeguard the Merit Principle, Commissioners remain firmly committed to promoting equality, diversity and good relations in all aspects of their work. To this end, Commissioners and staff continue to fulfil their responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, engage with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Disability Action to stay abreast of policy and case law developments

and attend relevant training events. The insights and learning gained better equips us to make and influence policy, to encourage and deliver best practice and to better understand the diverse characteristics and needs of the NICS workforce, prospective candidates and the wider community.

I have no doubt there will be fresh challenges ahead in 2022/23. However, I look forward to strengthening the positive relationships we already enjoy with the HOCS, her Departmental Permanent Secretaries and NICSHR and to working collaboratively, with energy and optimism, to help further the Transformation Agenda in the NICS.

I hope you find this Annual Report useful and informative. For more information on the work of Commissioners, please visit our website at www.nicscommissioners.org or contact the Secretariat who will be happy to assist.



DEIRDRE TONER
CHAIRPERSON

THE ROLE OF COMMISSIONERS

Who are the Civil Service Commissioners?

The first Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland were appointed in 1923 by His Majesty King George V. Commissioners themselves are appointed on merit following public advertisement and by fair and open competition. All Commissioners are independent of the NICS and this is fundamental to their role. They bring to the job wide experience from different backgrounds, careers and interests.

What do Commissioners do?

Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland were first appointed by Royal Warrant in 1923. Commissioners are appointed under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 which requires them to uphold the principle that selection for appointment to posts in the NICS should be on merit. This principle, which is known as the Merit Principle, is the basis of fair and open competition. The Commissioners' primary concern is to regulate appointments made to the NICS by way of open competition, at all levels, to ensure that the Merit Principle is adhered to. Additionally, Commissioners may consider and determine appeals made by existing civil servants under the NICS Code of Ethics.

While internal transfer and/or promotion are outside the remit of Commissioners, the broad principles set out in this Code reflect good practice and Commissioners consider they are applicable equally to internal appointments in order to safeguard the Merit Principle.

Discharging of Commissioners' Roles and Responsibilities

Commissioners discharge their statutory responsibilities by:

- maintaining the principle of selection on merit, for appointments to the NICS, on the basis of fair and open competition;
- making General Regulations which prescribe the circumstances in which the Merit Principle shall not apply;
- publishing and maintaining a Recruitment Code on the interpretation and application of the Merit Principle;
- auditing recruitment policies and practices followed in making appointments to the Civil Service to establish whether the Recruitment Code is being observed; and
- requiring the publication of such information as they may specify relating to recruitment and to the use of permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle.

Commissioners contribute to the development of an effective and impartial Civil Service by carrying out the duties imposed on them by the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. This contribution provides assurance to the public that appointments

to the NICS are made on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition. If appointments are made on merit, it should follow that the Civil Service has selected, from those available, the best persons for the jobs and the duties of the posts should therefore be carried out more effectively.

Commissioners' Strategic Priorities

Over the past year Commissioners have continued to focus on delivering on four strategic priorities:

- Safeguard an impartial and independent Civil Service by providing assurance that civil servants are recruited on the basis of fair and open competition;
- Comply with Sponsor Department's governance requirements and fulfil our obligations as a public body;
- Support the appointment and development of Commissioners and members of the Secretariat; and
- Secure, deploy and account effectively for the use of financial and other resources.

Delivering on these strategic priorities is at the core of Commissioners' work. Further detail is provided throughout this Report on some of the actions undertaken by Commissioners to ensure the targets set in the 2021/22 Business Plan, which feeds into delivery of the strategic priorities, were met.

Commissioners in Post since April 2021



Deirdre Toner

Chairperson,
appointed 1 June 2018
for a five year period.



Sinéad Burns

Commissioner,
appointed 8 March
2016 for a five year
period. Extended
for 5 years, until 7
March 2026.



Jim Scholes

Commissioner,
appointed 1 July
2012 for a five a year
period. Extended for
5 years, until 30 June
2022.

COMMISSIONERS' STATUTORY AUDIT FUNCTION

Commissioners' Approach to Audit and Review

Commissioners, in discharging their statutory duty to audit, seek to strike a balance between ensuring compliance with the Recruitment Code and delivering a proportionate and effective approach to their scrutiny role. Commissioners employ a range of approaches to support them in the delivery of their oversight role.

Commissioners undertake independent reviews of NICS recruitment and selection policies and practices relating to appointments to the NICS to assess if these are in keeping with the principles of the Recruitment Code. Commissioners identify and prioritise areas of recruitment they wish to examine and these are progressed through Annual Audit and Review Plans. Additionally, Commissioners' reviews also provide information, observations and recommendations for the purpose of promoting improvement in performance and outcomes.

During 2021/22, Commissioners reviewed their [Auditing for Improvement: Audit Framework and Guidance](#) to ensure that it remained fit for purpose and aligned with the Recruitment Code.

In addition to the schedule of audits and reviews, Commissioners undertake regular structured engagement with the NICS in support of their statutory audit function to influence improvements to NICS recruitment policies and practices and secure progress on audit outcomes.

Formal reviews and structured audit engagement are further underpinned by an evidence-based assurance framework, mandated monitoring and reporting requirements for the NICS and compliance checks via Commissioners' Article 6 Approval Process.

Assurance Framework and Monitoring Requirements

Article 4(5) of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 provides that information relating to recruitment must be published in accordance with any requirements which the Commissioners may specify. On an annual basis, DoF is required to publish information on all recruitment competitions which have been held to appoint staff to the NICS. The information to be published, and the publication period, are matters for determination and scrutiny by Commissioners and may change over time in response to changing circumstances and requirements.

Under Appendix C of the Recruitment Code, Commissioners require:

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

- (b) evidence to provide assurance that recruitment policies and practices in the NICS are subject to regular internal monitoring;
- (c) details of the appointments made under Regulation 3 (Exceptions) of the Commissioners' General Regulations 2007;
- (d) statistical summaries, in a format which the Commissioners may specify, of all recruitment activity during the publication period, including analyses by all categories covered by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- (e) any actions or initiatives undertaken in the reporting year to attract candidates, and advance a recruitment-related agenda for diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity and which specifically target areas of under-representation;
- (f) a report on the outcomes as a result of any such actions or initiatives referred to at (e) above; and
- (g) any other relevant information in a specified format regarding recruitment and selection as Commissioners may require.

NICS Annual Statement of Compliance on Recruitment

Commissioners require the DoF Permanent Secretary to sign off the annual '*Permanent Secretary Statement of Compliance on Recruitment*'. This confirms adherence to the Commissioners' Recruitment Code for all appointments made to NICS Departments during the annual reporting period, bolstering the evidence-based assurance framework and strengthening formal accountability at the most senior levels within the NICS.

The assurance framework is managed by the NICS and is comprised of the following key components:

- regular reviews of external competitions;
- monitoring of exceptional appointments and extensions to merit lists;
- assurance statements signed by HRConnect and Competition Leads when running an external competition;
- annual assurances from all Grade 7s within the NICSHR Resourcing and Workforce Planning Team; and
- annual confirmation from Permanent Secretaries/Accounting Officers that all appointments have been managed by NICSHR.

The above evidence is collated by NICSHR and provided to the DoF Permanent Secretary for consideration. If satisfied, the DoF Permanent Secretary will issue the annual Statement of Compliance to Commissioners.

Commissioners' 2021/22 Audit & Review Opinion

Commissioners use a range of oversight options and methodologies to obtain assurance and influence improvements to NICS recruitment policies and practices under their statutory audit function.

It is Commissioners' opinion that, based on the information available, the NICS recruitment and selection practices are in keeping with the requirements set out in the Recruitment Code.

Commissioners reached this conclusion having examined a range of evidence gathered throughout 2021/22 relating to their statutory functions. This included:

- scrutiny of the Appendix C data in the [Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2021](#) and the [Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 1 January 2021 - 31 December 2021](#);
- the operation of Commissioners' Article 6 Approval Process for SCS appointments;
- Commissioners' audit plan activity;
- the assurance provided by the DoF Permanent Secretary in the 2021 Statement of Compliance that all appointments made to the NICS during the 2021 reporting period complied with the Commissioners' Recruitment Code; and
- details of the underpinning evidence framework supporting the 2021 Statement of Compliance, as outlined in the Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2021.

Commissioners' 2021/22 Audit and Review Plan

Audit is a key part of Commissioners' Strategic Plan 2020-25, serving to help establish whether or not the Recruitment Code is being observed. The Annual Audit and Review Plan sets out the scheduled audit topics for the year ahead. The 2021/22 Audit and Review Plan covered the following reviews:

Review of NICS Processes for Managing and Monitoring the Tenure of Secondments

Commissioners carried out a review of the NICS Processes for Managing and Monitoring the tenure of secondments. The purpose of the review was to assure Commissioners that NICSHR has procedures in place to enable them to:

- access accurate information, at any given time, on the number of inward secondments to the NICS, their grade, department and branch; and
- proactively manage the duration of secondments, ensuring that where an extension beyond two years (or more, as appropriate) may be required, procedures are in place to request this from Commissioners, giving sufficient notice before the agreed secondment end-date.

The review found some weaknesses in the processes for managing and monitoring the tenure of secondments which may, in part, have been attributable to an existing policy on secondments which had not been updated to reflect changes in responsibilities due to the formation of NICSHR.

Commissioners therefore made three recommendations to the NICS for improvement which focused on the need for a clear policy that sets out the responsibilities of departments and of NICSHR and on ensuring confidence in systems for the recording of

and effectively monitoring and managing the tenure of inward secondments. In making their recommendations, Commissioners were cognisant that NICSHR was in the process of revising the secondment policy and had recently transferred responsibility for managing and monitoring secondments to a central secondments team. Commissioners therefore expected that plans may already have been in place to address some or all of these recommendations.

The outcome of this review will be published in our Annual Report 2022/23.

Audit of Article 6 Assurance Process

Commissioners carried out three audits of the Article 6 Approval Process for Senior Civil Service (SCS) appointments. All audits found evidence that the assurances were in order and that the Article 6 Approval Process was therefore operating in accordance with Commissioners' requirements.

Engagement with the NICS during 2021/22

Commissioners also exercise their statutory audit role through structured audit and engagement meetings with NICSHR to examine a range of recruitment issues. This is supported by dedicated audit and review meetings for Commissioners, allowing for detailed consideration of audit matters and operational meetings between the Secretariat and NICS resourcing staff, to progress and monitor audit and review action points.

Commissioners examined a range of recruitment issues under the engagement process with the NICS, including a number of ongoing and outstanding action points from Commissioners' previous audits and reviews. Further details on these areas are included below:

2020/21 Review of competitions below SCS

As noted in last year's Annual Report, Commissioners' 2020/21 review of competitions below SCS provided them with assurance that the NICS was complying with the principles set out in Commissioners' Recruitment Code. However, Commissioners made a number of recommendations in areas where improvements could be made. Commissioners engaged with NICSHR on these recommendations during the current reporting year and are pleased that NICSHR responded positively to advise that 10 of the 11 recommendations had been accepted and implemented and the remaining one was under consideration.

Progress of Audit and Review Outcomes

During the year a number of audit actions have been closed. Commissioners are pleased that the revisions to the NICS suite of Recruitment and Selection training have now been implemented. Commissioners are continuing to monitor and engage with NICSHR on the progress of outstanding recommendations in relation to equality monitoring.

NICSHR/Commissioners Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group

In addition to standard engagement work, Commissioners established a separate Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group with NICSHR. The purpose of this group is to implement the recommendation made by the Northern Ireland Audit Office in their report published in 2020 on Capacity and Capability in the Northern Ireland Civil Service that:

“the NICS and the Civil Service Commissioners should work in partnership, taking account of how other models operate, to explore how they can best support the delivery of the transformation agenda and the changes needed to reform the recruitment and selection process throughout the NICS”.

Since its inception, Commissioners have made a number of changes to the Recruitment Code to support and enable transformation of recruitment and selection processes within the NICS:

Use of Apprenticeships within the NICS

Commissioners and NICSHR discussed the use of apprenticeship schemes within the NICS, in relation to the principle of Merit, and the aspiration to expand the range of apprenticeships on offer. Commissioners are supportive of apprenticeship schemes as a pathway into permanent employment in the NICS and have updated their Code to include that apprenticeship schemes, which are openly advertised, do not constitute an exception to merit.

Statement on Positive Actions


Commissioners have included a paragraph in their Recruitment Code positively endorsing schemes to improve access to the NICS for people with a disability.

Exception to Merit: Regulation 3(e) – Where the person has been selected for appointment under Government programmes or initiatives

Commissioners' Recruitment Code includes a defined list of exceptions to appointment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. During the year, Commissioners engaged with NICSHR and the HOCS in relation to the appointment of individuals under Regulation 3(e), where the person has been selected for appointment under Government programmes or initiatives.

Commissioners support the use of this exception to address skills gaps in the NICS and to target under-represented groups with a view to making the NICS an employer of choice which is representative in its diversity of the people it serves.

Commissioners have therefore agreed amendments to their Code to clarify both the definition of “Government programmes or initiatives” and that the use of such schemes must be approved in advance by Commissioners.



The amendments will also enable the NICS to offer permanent appointments to individuals who have completed such schemes, subject to approval by Commissioners.

Diversity and Inclusion

Commissioners met with NICS HR to discuss the 2019 Workforce Review, including the Article 55 and Gender reviews and actions the NICS will take to increase diversity and inclusion. Positive engagement has taken place with NICS HR on the development of a revised approach to equality monitoring; further details will be provided in next year's Annual Report.

Commissioners' 2022/23 Audit and Review Plan

Annual Audit Plans set out the scheduled audit topics for the year ahead and will be reported on each year in the Commissioners' Annual Report. For 2022/23 Commissioners' audit and review will cover:

- Two Article 6 Approval Process audits; and
- Audit of two volume competitions below SCS.

SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE APPOINTMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

All appointments to the SCS through open competition require the approval of Commissioners. The statutory duty placed upon Commissioners to ensure that the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition is maintained can best be discharged by Commissioners chairing all open SCS competitions. In addition, Commissioners' Article 6 Approval Process requires a number of assurances from HRConnect in relation to the competition process.

In support of the request for approval of appointments under the Article 6 Approval Process, relevant recruitment information is provided by HRConnect to Commissioners at four key stages of the SCS recruitment process.

During this year Commissioners approved 52 appointments. These are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Senior Civil Service Appointments 2021/22

| POST | LEAD NICS DEPARTMENT |
|---|----------------------------|
| Under Secretary, EU Preparation & Transition Group (Grade 3)* | Department for the Economy |
| Senior Medical Officer - Primary Care Policy | Department of Health |
| Senior Medical Officer - Acute Care Policy | Department of Health |
| Senior Medical Officer - Public Health | Department of Health |
| Chief Digital Information Officer (Grade 3) | Department of Health |
| Chief Modernisation Officer, Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunal Service (NICTS) (Grade 5) | Department of Justice |
| Deputy Secretary, Healthcare Policy Group, (Grade 3) | Department of Health |
| Director of Organisational Change Directorate (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Secondary Care Directorate Assistant Secretary (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Covid-19 Responses Directorate (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Mental Health, Disability & Older People Director Assistant Secretary (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Director of Healthcare Transformation Assistant Secretary (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| General Healthcare Policy Assistant Secretary (Grade 5) | Department of Health |

| POST | LEAD NICS DEPARTMENT |
|---|--|
| Healthcare Policy (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Director of Transformation (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Mental Health, Disability & Older People Director Assistant Secretary (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Covid Travel Policy Branch (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Deputy Director Resources Governance & EU Group (Grade 3) | Department for Infrastructure |
| Deputy Chief Social Work Officer (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Deputy Director Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group (Grade 3) | Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs |
| Chief Executive, Construction & Procurement Delivery (Grade 5) | Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs |
| Director of Corporate Services, Comms & Engagement (Grade 5) | Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs |
| Chief Executive Construction & Procurement Division (Grade 3) | Department of Finance |
| Head of Civil Service* | The Executive Office |
| Chief Economist & Director of Central Policy (Grade 5) | Department for Communities |
| Commercial Director (Grade 3) | Department of Finance |
| 'Director of European Division (Grade 5) | The Executive Office |
| Deputy Secretary, Education & Children's Services (Grade 3) | Department for Education |
| Assistant Solicitor, Crown Solicitor's Office (Grade 5) | Department of Justice |
| Director of Corporate Services & People Development (Grade 5) | Department for Communities |
| Director of Central Services (Grade 5) | Department for the Economy |
| City Deals Director (Grade 5) | Department for the Economy |
| Strategic Policy Division (Grade 5) | Department for the Economy |
| GB & EU Trade Director (Grade 5) | Department for the Economy |
| Apprenticeships, Careers, & Vocational Education (Grade 5) | Department for the Economy |

| POST | LEAD NICS DEPARTMENT |
|--|--|
| International Trade & Investment Director (Grade 5) | Department for the Economy |
| Director of Resource Efficiency, NI Environment Agency (Grade 5) | Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs |
| Director of Water & Drainage Division (Grade 5) | Department for Infrastructure |
| Director of Transition Policy Division (Grade 5) | Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs |
| Director of Northern Ireland Food Animal Information System (Grade 5) | Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs |
| Chief Dental Officer (Grade 5) | Department of Health |
| Housing, Urban Regeneration & Local Government Deputy Secretary (Grade 3) | Department for Communities |
| Director Construction, Procurement & Delivery Supplies (Grade 5) | Department of Finance |
| Director of Major Projects and Procurement (Grade 5) | Department for Infrastructure |
| Chief Nursing Officer | Department of Health |
| Director of Revenues and Benefit Reform, Land & Property Services (Grade 5) | Department of Finance |
| Permanent Secretary* | Department of Finance |
| Permanent Secretary* | Department for Communities |
| Permanent Secretary* | Department for Infrastructure |
| Director of Engineering (Grade 3) | Department for Infrastructure |
| Director of Pensions, Disability, Benefit Security & Debt Management (Grade 5) | Department for Communities |
| Deputy Secretary Roads & Rivers (Grade 3) | Department for Infrastructure |

* Denotes that there was Ministerial involvement in these competitions in accordance with the Recruitment Code.

APPOINTMENTS MADE BY WAY OF EXCEPTION TO MERIT

Regulation 3 of Commissioners' General Regulations 2007 permits appointments to be made other than in accordance with the Merit Principle.

The Commissioners' General Regulations and Recruitment Code outline the particular circumstances in which the principle of selection on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition, shall not apply. The Commissioners' objective in permitting exceptions is to provide flexibility where it can be justified as necessary and appropriate to meet the business needs of the NICS. Commissioners scrutinise and challenge NICS requests for appointments to be made by way of exception to the Merit Principle on a case-by-case basis. Departments must justify to Commissioners why it is not reasonably practicable to make the appointment in accordance with the Merit Principle, in order that Commissioners may be satisfied that appointment by exception is warranted.

While the specific approval of Commissioners is required for some appointments by way of exception to merit, the Recruitment Code permits Departments to make appointments via exception to merit in certain limited circumstances at grades below SCS level for a period of up to two years. However, any extension beyond two years requires Commissioners' approval.

Appointments under Regulation 3(a) Secondment

During 2021/2022, Commissioners approved five appointments and the extension of one appointment to the NICS at SCS level.

As mentioned above, under Regulation 3(a) Departments can make appointments below SCS level for a period of up to two years. In line with the Code, Commissioners' approval was sought, and granted, for extensions to secondments for one post at Grade 7, two posts at Deputy Principal grade and four posts at Staff Officer grade.

Appointments under Regulation 3(d) Exceptional needs of the NICS

During 2021/2022, Commissioners approved the extension of two appointments at SCS level.

Appointments under Regulation 3(e) Where the person has been selected for an appointment under Government programmes or initiatives

During 2021/2022 Commissioners approved the permanent appointment of 15 people with disabilities at the conclusion of a pilot JobStart scheme facilitated by Department for Communities (DfC).

The number of appointments made by the NICS under each of the Exception to Merit categories for the last three calendar years is detailed in Table 2:

Table 2: Appointments made by the NICS by way of Exception to Merit: January 2019 – December 2021¹

| Exception Category | Appointments 2019 | Appointments 2020 | Appointments 2021 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| (a) Secondment | 13 | 17 | 20 |
| (b) Transfer from another civil service of the Crown | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| (c) Transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| (d) Exceptional needs of the NICS | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| (e) Appointments made under Government initiatives/ programmes | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| (f) Reinstatement | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 15 | 22 | 21 |

¹ This information is sourced from the NICS Annual Reports 2019 – 2021

NICS CODE OF ETHICS

One of the Commissioners' statutory roles is to hear appeals under the NICS Code of Ethics.

It is the expectation and practice of Commissioners that a potential appellant will have exhausted the internal Departmental procedures, and that any ongoing investigation will be completed and the outcome known, before Commissioners will make a determination on whether a Code of Ethics concern will be accepted as an appeal for investigation.

The NICS is required to provide, annually, the number of concerns dealt with by Departments under the Code of Ethics.

The NICS reported that, during the 2021 calendar year, eight concerns were received and accepted under the NICS Code of Ethics. They also reported that a concern had been received in the 2020 calendar year but had not been included in the 2020 return to Commissioners. Each concern was dealt with accordingly by the relevant Department with five being concluded and four currently ongoing.

During the 2021/2022 reporting period, Commissioners did not receive any concerns under the Code of Ethics.

On 1 February 2022 the NICS published its revised and updated Code of Ethics and in response to this, the Commissioners reviewed, published and distributed their Code of Ethics guidance document to align with the new Code and in doing so, streamlined three guidance documents into one. This new guidance document, which can be viewed on Commissioners' website ([CSCNI Guidance for Raising a Concern under the NICS Code of Ethics](#)) clearly sets out the process that the Commissioners will follow when considering appeals from existing Civil Servants.

MONITORING NICS RECRUITMENT

The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 and the Commissioners' Recruitment Code require NICS Departments and Agencies to publish a wide range of information and statistical summaries in relation to recruitment to the NICS.

In order to discharge our statutory duties, Commissioners rely on a range of recruitment-related information and statistical data collated and analysed by the Department of Finance (DoF) and the Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency (NISRA).

The NICS published its recruitment-related information for the calendar year of 2021² in the [Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2021](#) and the [NISRA Analysis of NICS Competitions 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021](#).

Each year Commissioners determine how the information published in these reports fulfils Article 4(5) of the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 as set out in Appendix C of the Recruitment Code. Data quoted below is taken from both reports.

NICS Recruitment during 2021

The number of recruitment competitions, applications and appointments for 2019-2021 reporting periods are included in **Table 4**.

Table 4: NICS Open Recruitment Competitions, Applicants and Updated Appointment Figures for 2019 to 2021³

| Detail | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Open Competitions | 110 | 90 | 132 |
| Number of Applicants* | 28,904 | 14,707 | 30,664 |
| Eligible Applicants** | 24,323 | 12,493 | 28,296 |
| Appointees*** | 2,944 | 717 | 938 |

* Valid applications

** Figures relating to eligible applicants may differ from previously published figures as the eligibility sift may not have taken place by the time of publication.

*** Figures as at 1 February 2022, further appointments are expected to be made from 2021 competitions.

² NICS recruitment-related data has been reported on a calendar-year basis to bring the reporting period into line with other reports on equality information.

³ Data includes both permanent and temporary competitions.

There were 132 NICS recruitment competitions in 2021, compared with 90 in 2020. These competitions attracted 30,664 valid applications, more than double the 14,707 valid applications in 2020. Two of these competitions were for temporary appointments and 34 were for SCS positions, up from 19 SCS competitions in 2020.

Commissioners note that the Executive Officer competitions (Executive Officer 2 and Executive Officer 1) each attracted over 11,000 valid applications.

87 complaints were received in respect of these 132 open competitions. The percentage of complaints (0.3%) has reduced from 0.6% during the past three years. Commissioners note that 76% of these complaints came from 66 applicants for the volume Staff Officer and Deputy Principal competitions and that the main complaint was about changes to the test and interview format which were made to ensure the competition could proceed in compliance with Covid-pandemic restrictions. Commissioners are pleased to note that there were no policy complaints registered and no complaints leading to formal legal action in 2021.

While Commissioners have no regulatory role in relation to internal competitions, they consider that it provides context and a helpful comparative perspective to publish this information alongside the open recruitment data. NICS internal recruitment competitions and appointment figures for 2019 to 2021 are therefore detailed in **Table 5** below (figures are taken from Table 4 of the Recruitment of the NICS Annual Report 2020/21).

Table 5: NICS Internal Recruitment Competitions and Appointment Figures 2019 to 2021

| Detail | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Internal Competitions | 89 | 67 | 82 |
| Internal Appointments* | 611 | 411 | 176 |

* Figures as at 1 February 2022.

Internal recruitment activity increased in 2021 but remained below the 2019 level. One of the 82 internal competitions during 2021 was for the SCS and resulted in one appointment to the SCS by 1 February 2022. Commissioners continue to encourage the NICS to address diversity issues within the NICS through open competition wherever possible. Commissioners welcome the stated aspiration of the NICS to move towards external recruitment and selection as a default position for the SCS.

Analysis of Competitions

Commissioners note the following with regard to the NISRA Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021. In doing so, Commissioners acknowledge that:

- the profile of applicants is dependent on the occupations for which jobs were advertised and the number of applications for each competition. A different set of competitions being launched could yield a different applicant profile;
- disparities in terms of equality categories between the actual and expected numbers of appointees, on an individual competition basis, are generally small (typically less than three), so the appointment of one candidate from a different category could change the outcome of the competition; and
- further appointments may be made from these competitions, which could change the profile of appointees.

Competitions held in 2021 for permanent NICS jobs

Of the 132 recruitment competitions which closed for applications during 2021, 130 were for permanent NICS jobs and attracted 30,328 valid applications. By 1 February 2022, a total of 837 appointments had been made from 89 of these 130 competitions, while no appointments had yet been made from the remaining 41 competitions. Analysis of appointments from these 89 competitions reveals some disparities between the actual number of appointees and the number expected if applicants within each category had been equal in merit across a number of equality groups.⁴

- Just over half of applicants were female (51%), with males representing 49% of applicants. The gender profile of appointees was broadly in line with what would be expected if male and female applicants were equal in merit;
- In terms of community background, 40.1% of applications were from Protestants, with a larger proportion from Catholics (49.7%) and 10.2% from applicants whose community background was not determined. The analysis in terms of community background shows that more Protestants (361 rather than 323) and fewer Catholics (390 rather than 425) than expected were appointed;
- The proportion of applications from minority ethnic groups was 2.1%. The ethnicity profile of appointees was broadly in line with what would be expected if white and minority applicants were equal in merit;
- The proportion of applicants who declared a disability was 7.2%. There were fewer appointees with a declared disability (47 rather than 58) than expected;
- In terms of age, over half (52.2%) of applicants were aged 25-39, with 16.1% aged 16- 24 and 21.8% aged 40-49. Just under one in ten applicants were aged 50 or over (9.9%). Notable disparities were seen in the age profile of appointees. There were 97 appointees aged 16-24 rather than the expected 134, 495 aged 25-39 rather than the expected 427 and 63 appointees aged over 50 rather than the expected 92;

⁴ In analysing the outcomes of recruitment competitions, it is important to ensure that any comparison is made on a 'like with like' basis. For each competition, the profile of applicants has been used to calculate the composition of appointees that would have been expected if the groups of applicants within each equality category (e.g. males and females) had been equal in merit. These results were then added together to obtain the overall 'expected' compositions.

- In terms of sexual orientation, 92.4% of applicants stated their orientation was towards someone of a different sex, with 4.3% reporting orientation towards someone of the same sex and 3.3% reporting orientation towards both sexes; and
- For those applicants who provided their NICS employment history, just under one third (32.0%) reported they were a current NICS employee, 7.4% of applicants reported that they had previously been an NICS employee and 60.7% reported no NICS employment history. The number of appointees who were current NICS employees was considerably higher than might have been expected (388 rather than 251).

Competitions held in 2021 for temporary NICS jobs

Of the 132 recruitment competitions which closed for applications during 2021, two were for temporary NICS jobs and attracted 336 valid applications. By 1 February 2022, a total of 101 appointments had been made from these competitions.

- Over half (52.2%) of applications were from males, with 47.8% from females;
- In terms of community background, the largest proportion of applications was from Catholics (54.9%), with 30.7% from Protestants and 14.3% from applicants whose community background was not determined;
- The proportion of applications from minority ethnic groups was 7.2%;
- The proportion of applicants who declared a disability was 4.5%;
- In terms of age, almost all applicants were aged 16-24 (95.8%). This age distribution reflects the fact that both competitions were for student placement positions;
- In relation to sexual orientation, 90.1% of applicants stated their orientation was towards someone of a different sex, with 5.1% reporting orientation towards someone of the same sex and 4.8% reporting orientation towards both sexes; and
- A small proportion of applicants reported they were a current NICS employee (0.3%), or had previously been a NICS employee (0.6%) while 99.1% reported no NICS employment history.

Analysis shows that the profile of appointees across gender, community background, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and NICS employment history is broadly in line with what might be expected if applicants within each equality group were equal in merit.

Competitions held in 2021 for NICS Senior Civil Service jobs

Of the 132 NICS recruitment competitions which closed for applications during 2021, 34 were SCS competitions which attracted 648 valid applications. By 1 February 2022, a total of 39 appointments had been made from 24 of these competitions.

- Over half of the applications were from males (57.7%), with 42.3% of applications from females;
- In terms of community background, a smaller proportion of applications were from Protestants (41.5%) with 46.0% from Catholics and 12.5% from applicants whose community background was not determined;
- The proportion of applicants from a minority ethnic background was 4.3%;
- Around one in twenty applicants (4.8%) declared a disability;
- In terms of age, almost half of applicants were aged 40-49 (45.2%) with just over two fifths (42.0%) aged 50 or over and 12.8% aged under 40;
- In terms of sexual orientation, 4.8% of applicants reported orientation to both sexes or to the same sex; and
- Over half of candidates (55.8%) reported that they were a current NICS employee, while 37.4% reported no NICS employment history.

23 males and 16 females were appointed, which was in line with what would be expected given the applicant profile of the competitions which made appointments. More current NICS staff were appointed than expected.

The NISRA report also provides equality analysis of the key interim stages of the competitions for permanent, temporary and senior civil service jobs.

Updated Summary of NICS Appointments

The NICS Annual Report presents recruitment data for NICS competitions with a closing date for applications in a particular calendar year, currently 2021. The appointment figures are for all appointments made from these competitions by early the following year, for 2021 this date was 1 February 2022. The figure reported may not be the final number of appointments which will be made. NICS competition merit lists usually remain live for a period of one year, with the possibility of extension where there are cogent and practical reasons for this.

Following a recommendation from Commissioners, the NICS publish updated appointment figures for the three prior reporting periods in order to address the issue of unreported appointments.

The [Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2021](#) therefore provides updated NICS appointment figures, along with expected appointees by equality category, for 2018, 2019 and 2020, taken from the [Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2022](#). Updated appointment figures, by Department, can also be found in this latter report (Annex A).

NICS Recruitment Developments 2021

Commissioners monitor ongoing developments within the NICS and meet regularly with the NICS to discuss key issues relating to recruitment and selection.

Review of Resourcing

During the year work continued on a fundamental review of the NICS approach to recruitment. The overarching objective of the review is to develop a policy framework to ensure the NICS is staffed with people who have the necessary skills and expertise for the job: the right people, in the right posts at the right time. In doing so, the review will identify ways in which recruitment and selection policies can support the delivery of the NICS People Strategy and the NICS's ambition to be representative of society.

Commissioners were consulted on the policy framework, which was approved by the Minister of Finance in October 2021, and continue to engage with NICS HR on the review through the Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group.

Review of Secondment Policy

Secondment is a permitted exception to merit under the Commissioners' Recruitment Code. During 2021, and as part of the wider review of recruitment and related policies, NICS HR commenced a review of the existing NICS secondment policy. The secondment policy covers the terms that apply to secondments into and out of the NICS and includes, in some cases, the need to obtain Commissioners' approval.

The aim of the policy review is to clarify roles, responsibilities, governance and approvals required when NICS business areas are agreeing secondments, including those identified through external open competition.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

Commissioners were supportive of, and approved, work to introduce a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for NICS recruitment and the Scheme was introduced in early 2022. The objective of the scheme is to ensure a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the eligibility criteria, are offered an interview. Further information on the NICS GIS can be found here: [guaranteed-interview-scheme-policy](#).

Promoting careers in the Civil Service through advertising, marketing and outreach activities

Commissioners' Recruitment Code requires the NICS to adopt policies and practices which promote diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity to enable the NICS to attract a wide pool of candidates for vacancies.

Commissioners were pleased to see developments in advertising during the year. In addition to the traditional print media advertising, channels used by the NICS to support a number of NICS-wide volume competitions included:

- Google Search and Display;
- LinkedIn;
- nijobs.com and nijobfinder.co.uk;
- Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok;
- Cool FM, Downtown and Q Radio;
- Spotify, digital radio and podcasts (for a NI listening audience); and
- Belfast Live - a website and associated social media channels attracting a younger demographic (under 35).

E-flyers to promote recruitment competitions were also developed and shared with, for example, the Careers Service network, local councils, charity and voluntary organisations supporting people into work and the disability and minority ethnic sectors.

Dedicated outreach sessions with the disability and ethnic minority sectors took place to promote the Executive Officer competitions and the Operational Delivery Apprenticeship Scheme. These were arranged in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Union for Supported Employment (NIUSE), and TEO's Racial Equality Unit.

The NICS hopes that in future it can build on these sessions, with a regular programme of activity to showcase the range of opportunities available with the NICS.

Commissioners were also pleased to note NICS HR's continued engagement with local universities and the ongoing work in relation to diversity and inclusion, further details of which can be found in Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2021.

OPEN Data NI

During 2021 NICS HR continued to publish data for completed stages of NICS volume recruitment competitions. These datasets are broken down by gender, community background, ethnic background, age and disability. They include analysis of internal NICS and external candidates up to completed stages to date; number of applications; number of candidates who sat the online tests; and the numbers who passed.

It is intended that data for all corporate competitions will continue to be published on the [Portal | Search \(opendatani.gov.uk\)](https://portal.nics.gov.uk) following the completion of each stage of the selection process.

COMMISSIONERS' ENGAGEMENT

Commissioners value the opportunity to develop and foster effective relationships with stakeholders as this facilitates the mutual sharing of experience and expertise. In addition to Commissioners' links to the Head of the Civil Service (HOCS) and the NICS Permanent Secretaries, Commissioners also work closely with their counterparts in other jurisdictions to explore issues of mutual interest.

Engagement with Stakeholders

In 2021/22, Commissioners' engagement with their stakeholders continued to take place virtually, in most cases, against a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and continued restrictions on face to face meetings. Towards the end of 2021 Commissioners welcomed the easing of restrictions, allowing a cautious return to the norm.

To support delivery of statutory functions, Commissioners met with stakeholders and regulatory organisations to ensure they remained up-to-date on policy, case law and good practice and were equipped with all relevant information about recruitment in the NICS.

Virtual meetings have proved very successful during the past two years and are now established as an alternative method of engagement which offers more flexibility to Commissioners and their stakeholders.

Engagement with the NICS

In June 2021, the NICS appointed a new HOCS. She took up the post in September 2021 and Commissioners were delighted to meet with her in November 2021 to provide an overview of the role of the Civil Service Commissioners and discuss current challenges and opportunities. The meeting also gave Commissioners an understanding of the HOCS vision for the NICS in general and for Recruitment and Selection in particular, especially in light of the recommendations arising from the NIAO Report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS.

Commissioners have since enjoyed further engagement with the HOCS on matters relating to Commissioners' statutory role and the NICS' aspirations to open up new pathways to employment in the NICS to attract a diverse mix of candidates. This will ensure that the NICS is more representative of the people it serves.



Left to right: Deirdre Toner, Jayne Brady (HOCS), Jill Minne (NICSHR), Jim Scholes and Sinéad Burns

Commissioners met with both the HOCS and representatives of the NICS Board in January 2022 to discuss:

- Commissioners' and the NICS Board's respective key priorities;
- Key developments over the past year; and
- The Northern Ireland Audit Office's Report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS and how Commissioners and the NICS can best work together in partnership to implement its recommendations.

In advance of this, Commissioners and representatives of NICSHR established a Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group which met for the first time in December 2021, putting in motion a pragmatic approach to addressing the NIAO Report's recommendations. The Group's aim was to formalise discussions on matters of Recruitment and Selection policy in the NICS and to focus on delivering the transformation agenda. The group meets quarterly with ad hoc meetings held as required. The group has met on a number of occasions since December to discuss matters such as:

- Review of the NICS Recruitment Policy;
- Review of the NICS Secondment Policy;
- Review of Recruitment Advertising Policy;
- Apprenticeships Policy;
- Job Start Scheme;
- Guaranteed Interview Scheme;
- Assured Skills Academy; and
- Revision of Commissioners' Recruitment Code.

Additionally, Commissioners have engaged frequently throughout the year with colleagues in NICSHR on a range of common interests, including:

- Review of the Recruitment Code to reflect a number of developments, including proposed changes to the NICS Secondment Policy; changes to the Audit Framework; a change to the section on Ministerial Involvement and changes to recognise the updated Code of Ethics;
- The HOCS Recruitment Competition;
- The use of Agency workers, Temporary employees and Fixed Term Contracts;
- Extensions to Merit Lists;
- 2019 NICS Workforce Review;
- Appointment of Permanent Secretaries;
- High volume applications for SCS Recruitment Competitions; and
- Update to the Article 6 Approval Process documentation.



Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group Meeting

Left to right: Debbie Sherlock (NICSHR), Aisling Quinn (NICSHR), Jim Scholes, Brian O'Rourke (NICSHR), Neil McKeivitt (NICSHR), Sinéad Burns, Deirdre Toner, Amanda Martin (Secretary)

Engagement with the NIO

Commissioners and their Secretariat regularly engaged with the NIO, their sponsor body, on matters pertaining to:

- Relocation from Stormont House to Erskine House, Belfast;
- Requirements under HM Treasury's Spending Review;

- Governance and Policy Issues;
- Appointment of a new Civil Service Commissioner;
- Review of NIO Framework Document;
- Internal audit on Sponsorship arrangements; and
- Cyber Risk and Resilience.

The Secretary also engaged on a regular basis with the NIO Deputy Director (the OCSC's sponsor) on matters relating to budget and governance. The Secretariat attended monthly meetings with the NIO's Finance Team.

Engagement on Diversity and Inclusion

A particular area of interest for Commissioners is "Diversity and Inclusion in the NICS". In October 2021, the Director of Work and Wellbeing (Department for Communities (DfC)) attended a meeting with Commissioners and NICS HR. The Director leads a team responsible for setting policy for disability, inclusion and work in Northern Ireland as a whole and for working collaboratively with NICS HR to implement initiatives within the NICS. Commissioners were provided with an overview of work areas NICS HR and DfC hope to progress, including the introduction of a JobStart Scheme in the NICS. The Scheme is designed to provide pathways to employment and work experience for people with disabilities.

Commissioners expressed their support for this and other similar initiatives and endeavoured to work together to discuss any changes required to their Recruitment Code to achieve the aim of making the NICS an exemplar employer in the context of the Disability in Work Strategy.

Other Engagement

The Chairperson met with the Non-Executive Directors of the NIO in November 2021 to provide an overview of the role of Commissioners and how they operate as an Arm's Length Body of the NIO, independent of the NICS.

Commissioners also met with representatives from the Business Consultancy Services to assist them with a review of the end-to-end process of recruitment and selection within the NICS.

The Secretariat, on behalf of Commissioners, continued to engage with their counterparts in the UK Civil Service Commission and the Commission for Public Service Appointments (ROI) to compare roles, benchmark and share best practice.

The Secretariat engaged with the Public Records Office Northern Ireland (PRONI) in their preparation of an updated Retention and Disposal Schedule.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY

Commissioners attach particular importance to issues of diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity which are central to the Merit Principle and embedded within Commissioners' Recruitment Principles.

Commissioners' Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan set out how their statutory obligations will be fulfilled to promote equality and good relations. Commissioners' Disability Action Plan currently runs from 2018-2022. Consultation on a draft Disability Action Plan for 2022-2027 will be launched in April 2022 and consultation documents placed on the Commissioners website, https://www.nicscommissioners.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/csc_ni_draft_disability_action_plan_2022_2027.pdf.

Commissioners also seek to influence and encourage the NICS to take proactive measures to promote equality of opportunity and target under-representation throughout all stages of the recruitment process and are pleased to see the details of activities outlined in [Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2021](#).

As mentioned previously, Commissioners have constructively engaged with the NICS to inform relevant changes to their Recruitment Code which will open up pathways to employment in the NICS for disadvantaged groups.

As already referenced elsewhere in this Annual Report, 2021/22 saw the relaxing and partial withdrawal of Covid-19 restrictions allowing for increased opportunities for face-to-face engagement. Previously awareness training on equality and disability had been facilitated by virtual training sessions and future events will now be a mix of online or in-person events, as appropriate.

Commissioners plan to meet with the Equality Commission in late spring and this will enable Commissioners to provide a detailed overview of the positive changes to the Recruitment Code. These changes allow for practical action to be taken in achieving the objectives of having a representative workforce and addressing inequalities in the NICS.

COMMISSIONERS' SECRETARIAT AND RESOURCES 2021/22

To deliver our statutory responsibilities we receive support from a Secretariat which comprises of six members of staff, five of whom are part-time and one who is full-time.

2021/22 Budget Expenditure

| Item | (£000s) |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Commissioners' Fees | 76 |
| Staff Salaries | 228 |
| Accommodation and Overheads | 29 |
| Training (Commissioners and Staff) | 0 |
| Total | 333 |

WEBSITES AND RESEARCH MATERIAL

The Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland www.nicscommissioners.org

NICSHR www.finance-ni.gov.uk/nics-hr

NICS Recruitment <https://irecruit-ext.hrconnect.nigov.net/>

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency www.nisra.gov.uk

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland www.equalityni.org

UK Civil Service Commission www.civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk

Commission for Public Service Appointments www.cpsa.ie

Public Appointments Service www.publicjobs.ie

'Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2021'

<https://irecruit-ext.hrconnect.nigov.net/resources/documents/n/i/c/nics-recruitment-annual-report-2021.pdf>

'Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021'

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/Analysis-of-NICS-Recruitment-Competitions-2021-2.pdf>

GLOSSARY

| | |
|--------|--|
| ALB | Arm's Length Body |
| CSCNI | Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland |
| DoF | Department of Finance |
| HOCS | Head of the Civil Service |
| NIAO | Northern Ireland Audit Office |
| NICS | Northern Ireland Civil Service |
| NICSHR | Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources |
| NIO | Northern Ireland Office |
| NISRA | Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency |
| PAC | Public Accounts Committee |
| PRONI | Public Records Office Northern Ireland |
| RHI | Renewable Heat Incentive |
| SCS | Senior Civil Service |



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