



**Civil Service
Commissioners**
for Northern Ireland



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

**ENSURING APPOINTMENT ON MERIT
AND SUPPORTING ETHICAL STANDARDS**





**Civil Service
Commissioners**
for Northern Ireland

OUR VISION:

A Civil Service for Northern Ireland which recruits and promotes the best and most diverse talent available in accordance with merit and free from personal and political patronage or partiality.

We, Your Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners
for Northern Ireland, present to Your Majesty
this Report on our work during the period

1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023



Deirdre Toner

Deirdre Toner
Chairperson



Sinéad Burns

Sinéad Burns



Dr Lesley Carroll

Dr Lesley Carroll



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**Civil Service
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**Sinéad Burns,
Commissioner
Deirdre Toner,
Chairperson and
Dr Lesley Carroll,
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 REVIEW

I am delighted to present this Annual Report on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland.

It was with great sadness, however, that Commissioners, who are appointed by Royal Warrant, joined the nation in mourning the passing of HM The Queen in September 2022, marking an end to her seven decades of devoted service to the UK. We wish her successor, HM King Charles III, a long and prosperous reign.

I would like to begin by thanking my fellow Commissioners, Sinéad Burns and Dr Lesley Carroll, for their support and assistance during a busy and often challenging 2022-23.

Lesley joined the Commissioners on 1 July 2022 bringing a wealth of experience from the various roles she has undertaken, including that of Prisoner Ombudsman and Equality Commissioner. Lesley replaced Jimmy Scholes to whom I would like to pay tribute for his most valuable contribution to Commissioners' work over two terms and a period of 10 years.



Jimmy brought sound judgement, logic and scrutiny to the role, which he performed with diligence and good humour. We wish him well in his retirement.

My thanks also go to the Secretariat which has continued to deliver effective and efficient support services despite a 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) reduction in staffing resulting in a 3.7 FTE staff complement by the end of March 2023.



This reduction was necessary to meet a 5% cost saving requirement and may present challenges in the year ahead. My thanks go to Anne Rainey, whose secondment ended during 2022-23 and to Mae Hamilton who retired at the end of March 2023 after more than 40 years of public service.

The challenges of delivering public services in Northern Ireland remain manifold. Northern Ireland is in the midst of a cost of living crisis, the NI Assembly has been suspended since February 2022 and peace, both local and global, is fragile. The 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement will be marked in April 2023, a reminder that strong and effective leadership remains critical in Northern Ireland and in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to steer the region towards a more politically stable and economically prosperous future. In the absence of a devolved administration, our Civil Servants have been tasked with difficult decision-making responsibilities that are normally the preserve of elected Ministers. The need to have the right people in the right jobs at the right time has never been more apparent and we are fortunate to have such capable, dedicated and experienced senior leaders in the NICS.

Recruitment and selection related recommendations contained within a series of reports published from 2020 onwards (*including the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS, the subsequent report from the Public Accounts Committee and the Report on the Findings of the Renewable Heat Incentive inquiry*) continue to influence Commissioners' focus and those of their NICS' colleagues and have resulted in increased engagement and activity between all parties.

The Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group has provided the forum for Commissioners to work in partnership with their colleagues in the NICS and to focus on furthering the recruitment and selection transformation agenda. Towards the end of the year, Commissioners and the NICS reviewed the group's Terms of Reference with a view to broadening the scope of the group to cover wider but relevant policy development.

The Group's activities complement the Audit and Engagement work which Commissioners routinely undertake with the help and co-operation of the NICS to deliver their statutory role of maintaining the Merit Principle through fair and open recruitment.

This important work is described in more detail within the body of this Annual Report.

During 2022-23, Commissioners, in response to the needs of the NICS and other factors, made a number of revisions to their Recruitment Code and published Version 14 on 1 July 2022. These are referred to in more detail later in this Report.

In 2022-23, Commissioners and the Secretariat further built on their relationship with colleagues in the UK Commission, sharing ideas and experience in the pursuit of best practice. I wish to pay tribute to Ian Watmore who ended a six-year term as First Commissioner in 2022. I had the pleasure of meeting with his successor to the role, Baroness Gisela Stuart, in June 2022 and I look forward to the year ahead when all three Commissioners will meet with their UK and Irish counterparts.

Commissioners remain committed to upholding the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition in the NICS in line with their statutory purpose and continue to favour and encourage the use of external recruitment as the default method of filling vacancies.

As part of their statutory duties Commissioners continue to chair all recruitment competitions to appoint Senior Civil Servants at Grade 5 and above to the NICS.

Finally, Commissioners remain firmly committed to promoting equality, diversity and good relations in all aspects of their work. Commissioners and staff continue to fulfil their responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and in 2022-23, they reviewed their Equality Scheme and, following consultation, published a new Disability Action Plan 2022-27. Commissioners engaged with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Disability Action to stay abreast of policy and case law developments and attended both the Harkin International Disability Employment Summit in June 2022 and a Conference facilitated by the Equality Commission – “Making Equality a Priority – Equality Law Reform in Northern Ireland”.

I have no doubt there will be fresh challenges ahead in 2023-24. However, I look forward to strengthening the positive relationships we already enjoy with the Head of the Civil Service (HOCS), her departmental Permanent Secretaries and NICSHR/People & OD



(Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources / People & Organisational Development) and to working collaboratively, with energy and optimism, to help further the Renewal 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?

Commissioners are independent of the NICS and this is fundamental to their role. As senior managers from the private, public and voluntary sectors, they bring to the position a wide range of experience from diverse backgrounds, careers and interests. Commissioners are free from personal and political patronage, and uphold the core values of the Civil Service, namely integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. Commissioners are recruited through public advertisement in a fair and open recruitment competition.

Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland are appointed by Royal Warrant to uphold the principle that selection to 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.

Commissioners also have a role in considering and determining 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.

In order to uphold the Merit Principle, Commissioners set out in their **Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025** that they will safeguard an impartial and independent Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) by maintaining the principle of selection on merit and considering and determining appeals made by existing civil servants under the NICS Code of Ethics. Commissioners will achieve this by:

- ▶ Providing assurance that all civil servants are recruited on the basis of fair and open recruitment;
 - ▶ Prescribing in General Regulations the permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle;
 - ▶ Prescribing and publishing the Recruitment Code ensuring it remains fit for purpose;
 - ▶ Auditing NICS recruitment policies and practices to establish whether the Recruitment Code is being observed;
- ▶ Require the publication of NICS recruitment related information, including the use of permitted exceptions;
 - ▶ Considering and determining appeals under the NICS Code of Ethics;
 - ▶ Providing written approval for appointments to any situation in the Senior Civil Service, or to any situation prescribed by the General Regulations;
 - ▶ Engaging with the NICS and relevant stakeholders; and
 - ▶ Chairing Senior Civil Service (SCS) competitions.

The Strategic Plan is underpinned by annual Business Plans which set out in more detail how the Commissioners' vision and priorities will be delivered.

COMMISSIONERS' RECRUITMENT CODE

The Recruitment Code has been updated to ensure it remains fit for purpose

Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 states that:

The Commissioners shall prescribe and publish a recruitment code on the interpretation and application of the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, including the circumstances in which any exceptions to that principle prescribed by the Commissioners, in pursuance of General Regulations or directions made under paragraph (2), may be exercised.

Commissioners committed in their 2022-23 Business Plan to:

- ▶ Review General Regulations with a view to identifying any additions or amendments/improvements to the exceptions to the Merit Principle; and
- ▶ Monitor and make revisions to the Recruitment Code to ensure that it remains effective and fit for purpose.

In 2022-23, Commissioners, in response to the requirements of the NICS, amended their Recruitment Code and **Version 14** was published on 1 July 2022.

In order to reinforce their commitment to Diversity and Inclusion in recruitment to the NICS, Commissioners added Paragraph 2.12:

Commissioners support the application of positive actions to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities who may otherwise have difficulty gaining access to employment in the NICS. They welcome the fact that the effect of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is to ensure that the appointment of persons with a disability to situations in the NICS is in accordance with the Merit Principle.

Exceptions to the Merit Principle

To help promote Apprenticeship Schemes, Commissioners added Paragraph 2.14 which reads:

Commissioners consider apprenticeships to be an additional method of recruitment, offering an alternative entry route to a career in the NICS. Apprenticeship schemes may be used to address workforce or skills needs in a profession or job role within the NICS. Apprentices may only be appointed to the NICS on merit through a fair and open competition. Apprentices are not considered to constitute an Exception to the Merit Principle.

Commissioners amended their position on **Exception to Appointment on Merit in Fair and Open Competition - Regulation 3(a) - Where the Person is appointed on secondment** to permit longer secondment terms.

Paragraph A.22 now reads:

Departments can make appointments under Regulation 3(a) without the approval of Commissioners provided the individuals are below SCS and the appointment will last no longer than three years...The Department may, with Commissioner approval, extend the secondment beyond three years in exceptional circumstances. Extension beyond five years will only be permitted by the Commissioners where a very short period of time is required to complete a piece of work and there are proper reasons to demonstrate why its completion within five years has not been possible. All requests for extensions to secondments must be accompanied by a robust business case.

To facilitate the introduction of new pathways to employment into the NICS, while maintaining the Merit Principle, Commissioners revised **Exception to the Merit Principle Regulation 3(e) – Where the person has been selected for appointment under a government programme or initiative.**

Paragraphs A.30 to A.37 now read as follows:

A.30 *From time to time provision may be made for temporary or permanent appointments in the context of a particular and current government programme or initiative. Examples include those programmes designed to assist, for instance, people who are unemployed or people with disabilities who often have difficulty gaining employment through the normal competition process. Commissioners accept that the NICS should be able to employ individuals through government programmes or initiatives, adapting the principles of this Code, as appropriate.*

A.31 *In this context, a government programme or initiative is defined as a scheme which has been designed by the NI Executive or its departments for implementation in any organisation in Northern Ireland or a bespoke programme which has been designed by the NI Executive or its departments for use in the NICS.*

A.32 *In the case of a programme or initiative which has been designed by the NI Executive or its departments with a view to implementation in the NICS, the relevant Permanent Secretary or HOCS, as appropriate, must indicate in writing to Commissioners their opinion as to whether or not the programme/initiative may have the capacity to be novel or contentious. In so doing, the relevant Permanent Secretary or HOCS, as appropriate, must provide evidence as to why this conclusion has been reached, including whether:*

- (a) the programme/initiative may require Executive approval in accordance with the Ministerial Code;*
- (b) the programme/initiative is likely to enjoy support from all sections of society;*
- (c) the programme/initiative will enhance diversity and inclusion in the NICS workforce; and*

also

- (d) provide evidence on the extent to which a proper balance can be struck between those appointed on merit and those appointed by way of an exception to merit.*

- A.33 In either circumstance outlined at A.30 above, the introduction of a government programme or initiative for use in the NICS must have prior Commissioner approval. (The code refers readers to Appendix D).*
- A.34 The selection procedures used to determine who to appoint within the specified programmes or initiatives must be demonstrably fair and based on the requirements of same. Records must be kept on how suitability for appointments has been assessed.*
- A.35 Where departments have made temporary appointments under Regulation 3(e), they may wish to make those individuals permanent upon successful completion of the relevant scheme.*
- A.36 Requests to make an appointment permanent following completion of an approved temporary scheme must be approved in advance by Commissioners. All such requests must be submitted for approval by Commissioners at least three months in advance of the end date of the temporary appointment.*

- A.37 The process used by the NICS when making a permanent appointment must be fair and fit for purpose and may be subject to Commissioners' audit. Such process should provide assurance to Commissioners that those appointed to permanent positions through a government programme or initiative have been considered to be suitable for appointment.*

Commissioners added Appendix D (as referred to in paragraph A.33) to their Recruitment Code describing, "Considerations that Commissioners will take into account when processing a request to approve the introduction of a Government programme or initiative under the Exception to the Merit Principle Regulation 3(e)."

COMMISSIONERS' STATUTORY AUDIT FUNCTION

Commissioners' Audit Function

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 determine if the Recruitment Code been observed by:

1. Mandated monitoring and reporting requirements for the NICS;
2. Evidence-based assurance framework;
3. Commissioners' Annual Audit Plan; and
4. Commissioners' Article 6 Approval Process.

1. Mandated monitoring and reporting requirements for the NICS

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 of actions or initiatives referred to at (e); and
- g) any other relevant information in a specified format regarding recruitment and selection as Commissioners may require.

The NICS has published this information, which has been scrutinised by Commissioners, in the [Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2022](#) and the [Analysis of Recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2022](#) reports.

2. Evidence-based assurance framework

Commissioners require the Department of Finance (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 NICS resourcing teams; and
- ▶ annual confirmation from Permanent Secretaries/ Accounting Officers that all appointments have been managed by NICS resourcing teams.

The above evidence is collated by the NICS 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 have received the signed statement from the DoF Permanent Secretary confirming adherence to the Commissioners' Recruitment Code for all appointments made to NICS Departments during 2022.

3. Commissioners' Audit Plan 2022-23

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 2022-23 Commissioners' Audit and Review Plan covered:

- ▶ Audit of Article 6 Assurance Process; and
- ▶ Audit of two volume competitions below SCS.

Audit of Article 6 Assurance Process

Commissioners carried out an audit of the Article 6 Approval Process for SCS appointments for two competitions. The audit found evidence that the assurances were in order and that the Article 6 Approval Process was therefore operating in accordance with Commissioners' requirements.

A minor improvement recommendation in relation to electronic signatures for CIM (Competition Initiation Meeting) records was made, which the NICS accepted and addressed.

Audit of two volume competitions below SCS

Commissioners carried out an audit of two volume competitions below SCS.

The purpose of the audit was to examine the application of the Recruitment Code to ensure that the selection processes used in the competitions and the manner in which they were deployed in practice were consistent with upholding the Merit Principle.

The audit found significant non-compliance in the area of Management and Quality Assurance Arrangements. Commissioners determined that whilst these instances of non-compliance were important, and therefore needed to be addressed, they did not consider them to have undermined the Merit Principle. The majority of areas reviewed evidenced compliance with Commissioners' Recruitment Code.



Commissioners' recommendations:

- ▶ that NICS HR ensures that all records that clearly support all stages of the recruitment and selection process are complete and appropriately retained; and
- ▶ that NICS HR ensures that Panel Evaluation Forms are completed by Panel Chairs of competitions

below SCS as these forms enable NICS HR to determine if any action is appropriate for future competitions.

Commissioners are pleased that the NICS management response accepted their recommendations and detailed actions taken to address the recommendations.

4. Commissioners' Article 6 Approval Process

During 2022 Commissioners chaired all SCS competitions and, based on their own participation and assurances provided by HRConnect at each stage of the process, concluded that

each competition was managed and progressed in accordance with the requirements of the Recruitment Code. Details of the competitions chaired can be found on pages 23 to 25.

Has the Recruitment Code been observed?

Commissioners' 2022-23 Audit & Review Opinion:

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.

Audit Engagement with the NICS during 2022-23

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.

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:

Outcome of Review of NICS processes for managing and monitoring the tenure of secondments 2021-22

As detailed in last year's Annual Report, 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 2 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 a 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. The recommendations 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.

The NICS implemented a revised Secondment Policy and new underpinning guidance in July 2022, rationalised its inward secondment records and carried out a data validation exercise with departments to ensure confidence in their data. This validation exercise will be carried out annually.

The NICS also accepted Commissioners' view that the assurance statement confirming that appointments made as exceptions to merit have been made in line with the Recruitment Code, and have been reported, should be added to the Annual Permanent Secretary Statements of Assurance. Commissioners are pleased that this will be in place from 2023 onwards.

Diversity and Inclusion/Equality Monitoring

Commissioners met with NICS officials to discuss the 2019 Workforce Review, including the Article 55 Review and Gender Review and actions the NICS will take to increase diversity and inclusion.

Equality monitoring of individual recruitment competitions was introduced by the NICS following Commissioners' 2015 Review of Recruitment Related Data. This is in addition to other monitoring and reporting including the annual Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions, the annual Fair Employment Return and Triannual Article 55 and Gender Review to the Equality Commission for NI; the Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service; and the NICS Annual Recruitment Report.

During the year Commissioners engaged with the NICS as it developed a new reporting format for monitoring of individual recruitment competitions.

The new format reports on competitions that closed to appointments (rather than applications) in each quarter and provides analysis of:

- ▶ the equality composition of the applicant pool in terms of gender and community background along with a comparison against the potential applicant pool, that is, the NI economically active population; and
- ▶ the wider equality composition of the applicant pool including age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation etc.

The reporting format captures the lifespan of the competition (i.e. the date the competition closed to applications until the date the competition closed to appointments) and covers any outreach undertaken and a summary of how applicants learnt of the vacancy.

Commissioners trust that the revised reporting mechanism will provide the NICS with more detailed equality data at individual competition level which can be used when considering future competitions and outreach activity.

Commissioners are also pleased that two outstanding audit recommendations have been implemented as a result of this work, including an additional assurance added to the DoF Permanent Secretary Statement of Assurance in relation to competition monitoring.

Commissioners' 2023-24 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 2023-24 Commissioners' audit and review will cover:

- ▶ Two Article 6 Approval Process audits; and
- ▶ Audit of nine competitions below SCS (one from each department).



SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE AUTHORISATION 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 37 appointments. These are listed in Table 1 on the next page.

It should be noted that some of the competitions included below may have been detailed in previous Annual Reports. However, approval was granted for appointments from these competitions during the reporting period.

Table 1: Senior Civil Service Competitions completed during 2022-23

POST	LEAD NICS DEPARTMENT
Resources and Corporate Management Under Secretary (Grade 3)	Department of Health
Deputy Secretary, Social Services Policy Group (Grade 3)	Department of Health
Director of Good Relations and Inclusion (Grade 3)	The Executive Office
Urban Villages, Race & Communities (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Head of Infrastructure Division (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Head of Good Relations and T:BUC (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Programme for Government & NICS of the Future Division (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Truth Recovery Programme (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Director of Marketing, Outreach & Internal Communications (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Chief of Staff, Office of the Head of Civil Service (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Chief of Staff, Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland (Grade 5)	The Executive Office
Director of Investment & Infrastructure (Grade 5)	Department of Education
Director of Qualifications, 14-19 Strategy and Youthwork Policy (Grade 5)	Department of Education
Director of Rating Aspirations, Supporting Learning and Empowering Improvement (Grade 5)	Department of Education
Director of Rating Policy (Grade 5)	Department of Finance
Director of Pensions (Grade 5)	Department of Finance
Director of Strategic Planning & Reform (Grade 3)	Department of Finance
Director of IT Assist (Grade 5)	Department of Finance
Corporate HR Director (Grade 3)	Department of Finance
Director of Commercial Delivery Group (Grade 5)	Department of Finance
Head of Internal Audit and Fraud Investigation Services (Grade 5)	Department of Finance
Head of City & Growth Deals (Grade 5)	Department of Finance



POST	LEAD NICS DEPARTMENT
NISRA Chief Executive & Registrar General (Grade 3)	Department of Finance
Director of Voluntary & Community Division (Grade 5)	Department for Communities
Director of Further Education (Grade 5)	Department for the Economy
Director of Electricity & Security of Supply (Grade 5)	Department for the Economy
Director of Heat, Buildings & Climate Change (Grade 5)	Department for the Economy
Energy Strategy, Consumers, Operations and Finance (Grade 5)	Department for the Economy
Director of Hydrogen Gas, Transport, Minerals & Petroleum (Grade 5)	Department for the Economy
Director of Sustainable Agri-food Development (Grade 5)	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Innovation Implementation Project (Grade 5)	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Director of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Policy and Logistics Division (Grade 5)	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Climate Change & Green Growth Policy (Grade 5)	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Green Growth Division (Grade 5)	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Environmental Resources Policy Division Director (Grade 5)	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Director of Network Maintenance (Grade 5)	Department for Infrastructure
Director of Network Development (Grade 5)	Department for Infrastructure

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. These are:

- ▶ **Regulation 3(a)** Where the person is appointed on secondment;
- ▶ **Regulation 3(b)** Where the person to be appointed holds a situation in another Civil Service of the Crown;
- ▶ **Regulation 3(c)** Where the person to be appointed is, or has recently been, employed on functions which have been or are being transferred to the Crown;
- ▶ **Regulation 3(d)** Where the person to be appointed is of proven distinction and exceptional reasons relating to the business needs of the Civil Service provide justification for the appointment;
- ▶ **Regulation 3(e)** Where the person has been selected for an appointment under Government programmes or initiatives; and
- ▶ **Regulation 3(f)** Where the person has previously held a situation in the Civil Service and is being reinstated.



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. In late 2021, Commissioners and the NICS discussed and agreed amendments to the permitted length of inward secondments to the NICS and addressed the issue of consecutive secondments. In July 2022, Commissioners published an amended version of their Recruitment Code permitting departments to make appointments via exception to merit at grades below SCS level for a period of up to three years. Any extension beyond three years would require Commissioners' approval.

The requirement for Commissioners' approval for any appointments in the Senior Civil Service, by way of exception to merit, did not change.

Appointments under Regulation 3(a)

During 2022-23, Commissioners approved **five** new appointments and the extension of **three** appointments to the NICS at SCS level.

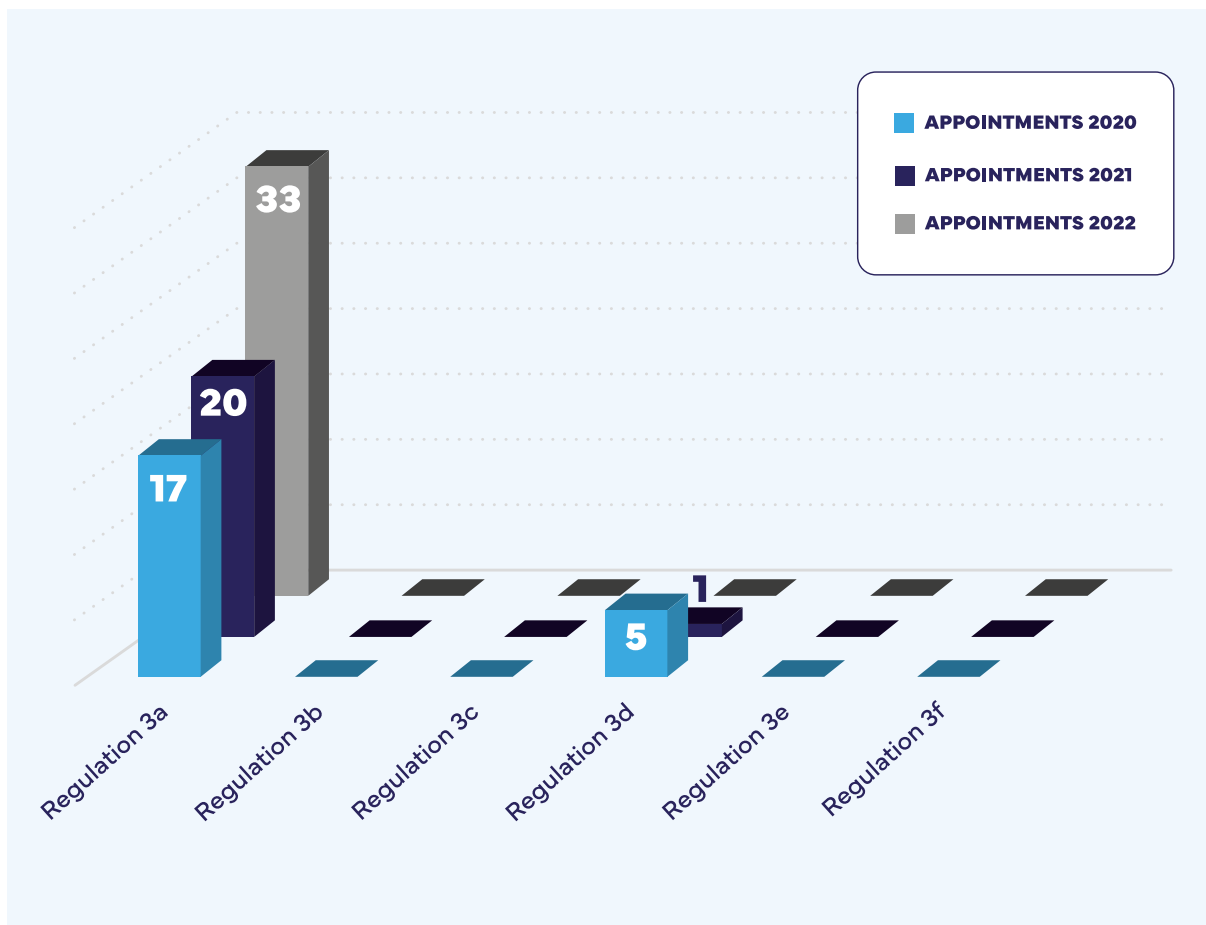
As mentioned above, under Regulation 3(a) departments can make appointments below SCS level for a period of up to three years. In line with the Code, Commissioners' approval was sought, and granted, for extensions to secondments for **one** post at Grade 7, **one** post at SPTO (Senior Professional Technical Officer) grade and **one** post at Staff Officer grade.

Appointments under Regulation 3(b)

During 2022-23, Commissioners approved the appointment of **one** position at SCS level on a permanent basis.

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 2020 – December 2022¹



Key: Where the person to be appointed:

3a – is appointed on secondment;

3b – holds a situation in another Civil Service of the Crown;

3c – is employed on functions which have been transferred to the Crown;

3d – is of proven distinction;

3e – has been selected under Government programmes or initiatives; and

3f – has previously held a situation in the Civil Service and is being reinstated.

¹ This information is sourced from the NICS Annual Reports 2020 – 2022



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 2022 calendar year, seven concerns were received and accepted under the NICS Code of Ethics. Each concern was dealt with accordingly by the relevant department with five being concluded and two currently ongoing.

During the 2022-23 reporting period, Commissioners received correspondence from ten individuals who wished to raise a concern under the NICS Code of Ethics. However, after initial consideration, all ten concerns did not meet the eligibility criteria for Commissioners to accept for investigation as appeals under the Code of Ethics.

The Civil Service Commissioners' [Guidance on Raising a Concern under the NICS Code of Ethics](#) can be viewed on Commissioners' website [Guidance on Raising a Concern under the NICS Code of Ethics](#). This clearly sets out the eligibility criteria and the process that 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 Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

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 is taken from both reports.

The NICS published its recruitment-related information for the calendar year of 2022² in the [Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2022](#) and the [Analysis of NICS Competitions 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022](#).

2 NICS recruitment related data is reported on a calendar year basis in line with other reports on equality information.



NICS Recruitment During 2022

Key Facts:

- ▶ 149 recruitment competitions (up from 132 in 2021);
- ▶ 1 for a temporary appointment;
- ▶ 28 for SCS positions (34 in 2021);
- ▶ 18,233 valid applications (down from 30,664 in 2021); Highest number of applications for Staff Officer competition (4,951);
- ▶ 158 complaints
 - 73% of complaints related to the Deputy Principal and Staff Officer competitions launched during 2022 and the 2021 Executive Officer competitions.
 - Common complaint themes – connectivity during online interviews & panel decisions at sift or interview.

The number of recruitment competitions, applications and appointments for 2020-2022 reporting periods are included in **Table 3**.

Table 3: NICS Open Recruitment Competitions, Applicants and Appointment Figures for 2020 to 2022

Detail	2020	2021	2022
Open Competitions	90	132	149
Number of applications*	14,707	30,664	18,233
Eligible applications**	12,490	28,303	14,188
Appointees***	752	1,896	770

* 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 31 December 2022. Further appointments may be made.

Equality Information

Competitions held for permanent NICS jobs

- ▶ 148 competitions;
- ▶ 18,213 valid applications; and
- ▶ 770 appointments made from 81 competitions by 31 December 2022.

Applicants

- ▶ 52.3% male; 47.7% female;
- ▶ 43.8% Protestant; 45.8% Catholic; 10.4% undetermined background;
- ▶ 2.7% from minority ethnic groups;
- ▶ 8% declared a disability;
- ▶ 14.7% aged 16-24; 44.8% aged 25-39; 26% aged 40-49; 14.5% aged 50+;
- ▶ 92.6% orientation towards someone of a different sex; 4.2% orientation towards someone of the same sex; 3.2% orientation towards both sexes; and
- ▶ 43.5% NICS employee; 5.6% previous NICS employee; 50.8% no NICS employment history.

NISRA's analysis details that:

- ▶ the gender profile of appointees was broadly in line with what would be expected if male and female applicants were equal in merit;
- ▶ the analysis in terms of community background shows that more Catholics, and fewer candidates whose community background was not determined, were appointed than expected;

- ▶ the ethnicity profile of appointees was in line with what would be expected if white and minority applicants were equal in merit;
- ▶ there were fewer appointees without a declared disability than expected;
- ▶ there were 130 appointees aged 16-24 rather than the expected 146, there were 364 appointees aged 25-39 rather than the expected 340 and 94 appointees aged over 50 rather than the expected 103; and
- ▶ notable disparities were seen in the Employment History of the appointee. The number of appointees who were current NICS employees was considerably higher than might have been expected while those with no NICS Employment History was considerably lower than expected.

In relation to the first key selection stage (invitation to interview), males, applicants within the age groups 25-39 and 40-49 and those who were current NICS employees were more likely to be invited to interview than expected. Catholics, minority ethnic groups and those orientated toward a different sex were less likely than expected to be invited to interview.

At the interview stage, the analysis shows that across the various equality categories the profile of applicants who passed the interview is broadly in line with what would be expected if interviewed applicants were equal in merit. Male applicants were less likely to pass interview than female applicants. Applicants with a declared disability were less likely to pass interview than would be expected, as were those aged 16-24 and those aged over 50. Candidates who reported a sexual orientation toward both sexes were less likely to pass than would be expected, as were applicants with no previous Employment History in the NICS.

Competitions held for temporary NICS jobs

- ▶ 1 competition;
- ▶ 20 valid applications; and
- ▶ 0 appointments made by 31 December 2022.

Applicants

- ▶ 70% female; 30% male; and
- ▶ 65% Catholic; 35% Protestant/undetermined background.

Competitions held for NICS Senior Civil Service jobs

- ▶ 28 competitions;
- ▶ 901 valid applications; and
- ▶ 24 appointments made by 31 December 2022.

Applicants

- ▶ 51.7% male; 48.3% female;
- ▶ 48.5% Catholic; 40.6% Protestant; 10.9% undetermined background;
- ▶ 1.9% from minority ethnic groups;
- ▶ 3.7% declared a disability;
- ▶ 18.5% aged under 40; 42.4% aged 40-49; 39.1% aged 50+;
- ▶ 4.8% orientation towards both sexes or to the same sex; and
- ▶ 60.5% current NICS employee; 6.2% previous NICS employee; 33.4% no NICS employment history.

Analysis shows that actual numbers appointed were broadly in line with what would be expected given the applicant profile of the competitions which made appointments.

Additional equality analysis information on recruitment for permanent, temporary and Senior Civil Service positions can be found in the [**Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 2022**](#).

In considering the equality information in relation to competitions which closed for applications in 2022, it is important to note the following:

- ▶ 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; and
- ▶ further appointments may be made from these competitions, which could change the profile of appointees.

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

The figures, as at 31 December 2022, for 2019, 2020 and 2021 are contained in Annex A of the [Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 2022](#). The profile of appointees is compared with the profile that would be expected if candidates in each group of applicants were equal in merit.

Internal Competitions

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 2020 to 2022 are therefore detailed in **Table 4** below.

Table 4: NICS Internal Competitions and Appointment Figures 2020 to 2022

Detail	2020	2021	2022
Internal Competitions	67	82	13
Internal Appointments	484	292	50

Internal competition activity decreased significantly in 2022. Two of the 13 internal competitions during 2022 were for SCS positions and two appointments to the SCS had been made by 31 December 2022. Commissioners continue to encourage the NICS to address diversity issues within the NICS through open competition wherever possible.



NICS Recruitment Developments 2022

Commissioners monitor ongoing developments within the NICS and meet regularly with the NICS to discuss key issues relating to recruitment and selection. We are pleased to note that the NICS has reported a number of recruitment developments and improvements during 2022 including:

- ▶ The introduction of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for use in external competitions, where appropriate, to ensure a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview;
- ▶ Work to develop a ring-fencing scheme, which will guarantee an offer of appointment to a minimum number of disabled applicants who have demonstrated, through the relevant selection process, that they meet the required standard for appointment;
- ▶ Participation in the JobStart scheme, facilitating 15 paid work experience placements for disabled young people in roles undertaking work broadly equivalent to Administrative Officer (AO duties). Commissioners were pleased to support the NICS in placing nine participants in permanent positions at the end of these placements, through amendments made to our Recruitment Code in relation to the exception to merit Regulation 3(e) – where the person has been selected for an appointment under Government programmes or initiatives;
- ▶ A pilot Civil Service Skills Academy, modelled on the Department for the Economy's Assured Skills programme, aimed at people with Level 5 or higher qualifications, who were unemployed, underemployed or seeking to retrain. The Academy offered pre-employment training and a guaranteed interview upon successful completion for a permanent position at Staff Officer or Deputy Principal;
- ▶ Test score banking across the test suites for all General Service competitions from AO to Grade 6 – where a candidate reaches the minimum required standard to pass the tests, generally their score will be banked for a period of 12 months from when the test score was first obtained, during which they will not be required to retake the test when applying for future jobs at the same grade;

- ▶ Replacement of the previous requirement for GCSE qualifications for Custody Prison Officer and Night Custody Officer with two newly developed online assessment tests;
- ▶ The launch of a Graduate Management Programme and competitions at SO and DP grades, supported by advertising campaigns;
- ▶ The launch of a competition to fill approximately 140 student placements (up to 51 weeks) across 22 categories of placement;
- ▶ Increased use of apprenticeships; and
- ▶ Outreach sessions with the disability and minority ethnic sectors to promote external recruitment competitions and participation in events such as Belfast Pride and Belfast Mela to promote the NICS as an inclusive employer.

The NICS has also engaged in significant diversity and inclusion activity, through the implementation of its Diversity Action Plan 2022-23, demonstrating its commitment to being a diverse and inclusive employer and realising its vision for an inclusive workplace culture where its people are valued for who they are, where they can be free to be themselves and can fulfil their potential.



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 2022-23, 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.

While hybrid working is now the norm and provides many advantages, the return to face to face interaction with colleagues and stakeholders is a much welcomed development.

Further, Commissioners became active on Twitter as a means of promoting greater public awareness and understanding of Commissioners' role and in order to better connect with stakeholders and the public. This allows Commissioners to share news and retweet articles relevant to their work.

Engagement with the NICS

Commissioners have had the privilege of working with the NICS Board and with the HOCS, and continue to enjoy a positive and effective working relationship. During the 2022-23 period, they have enjoyed useful and productive engagement 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.

Commissioners also met with Neil Gibson, who took up the position of DoF Permanent Secretary in April 2022. During the course of their introductory meeting, Commissioners discussed their role and the legislative basis for their work and Neil's aspirations for the NICS of the future. Commissioners look forward to working with Neil on matters related to recruitment and selection.

During the 2022-23 period the NICS re-structured their Human Resources function appointing a new Director of NICS HR, Catherine Shannon whilst Jill Minne took up a new role as Director of People and Organisational Development. Commissioners met with Catherine to discuss her new role and her vision and plans for the NICS.

Throughout the 2022-23 reporting period, the Commissioners have continued to collaborate quarterly with representatives of the NICS via the Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group. As noted in last year's Annual Report, this group was formed to address the recommendations of the NIAO's Report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS which was published in November 2020 and to formalise discussions on matters of NICS Recruitment and Selection policy.

The Commissioners have reviewed and amended their Recruitment Code to reflect changes to policy and to facilitate new pathways to employment in the NICS (see pages 12 to 15).

Moving forward, the focus of the group will be on policy development to support the NICS Renewal Agenda and the changes needed to reform the recruitment and selection process throughout the NICS.

Additionally, Commissioners and their Secretariat have engaged frequently throughout the year with colleagues in NICS HR and People and Organisational Development on a range of common interests including:



Managing high volume applications for SCS Competitions



Apprenticeship Schemes



Civil Service Skills Academy



Amendments to Regulation 3e – Government Programmes and Initiatives



Use of Consultants in SCS Recruitment Competitions



Secondment Policy



Equality Monitoring



Agency Workers



Article 6 Templates



Exception to merit request forms



Conflict of Interest



Transfer of NI Civil Servants to UK Civil Service



Ministerial Involvement in SCS Recruitment Competitions



Use of Merit Lists

Engagement with the UK Civil Service Commission

Commissioners continue to enjoy a positive and productive relationship with the UK Civil Service Commission.

The UK Commission appointed a new First Commissioner, Baroness Gisela Stuart, early in 2022, taking over from Ian Watmore, and a new Chief Executive, Kavalneer Walia, in August 2022, replacing Peter Lawrence.

In June 2022, the Chairperson attended an introductory meeting with Baroness Stuart where they discussed their respective roles, the various challenges they faced and the opportunities for future collaboration. The Secretariat continue to meet regularly with their counterparts to discuss emerging issues.

Commissioners look forward to meeting the UK Commissioners face to face later in 2023 and will use the opportunity to further develop the positive working relationships and continue to learn from and contribute to each other's knowledge and experience.





PROMOTING DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

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

Commissioners' Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan sets out how their statutory obligations will be fulfilled to promote equality and good relations. A public consultation on the draft Disability Action Plan for 2022-2027 was launched in April 2022. Consultation documents were issued to our consultees, and placed on Commissioners' website. Consultees were invited to participate in the process and share their views to help inform and shape the Action Plan. Following the consultation period the **Disability Action Plan for 2022-2027** was published, ready for implementation.

A particular area of interest for Commissioners is ensuring that recruitment to the NICS is as accessible as possible to the people it serves. Commissioners engaged with the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on two occasions during the 2022-23 reporting period.

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Both meetings were constructive and provided Commissioners with updates on legislation and recent tribunal cases with regard to disability and employment.

Commissioners also had an opportunity to hear more about the ongoing work of the Equality Commission and discussed the challenges facing those with disabilities living in Northern Ireland, reasonable adjustments and positive actions in relation to recruitment.



In June 2022 Commissioners attended the **Harkin Summit** in Belfast. This was a globally significant international disability employment event organised by Disability Action NI and the Department for Communities, in partnership with the Harkin Institute. It brought together key champions and implementers from around the world to increase the profile and awareness of disability employment issues. Commissioners gained a number of valuable insights through the presentations, panel discussions and workshops. Commissioners also networked with peers and were keen to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by people with a disability.

In order to consolidate their commitment to diversity and inclusion, Commissioners included in their Recruitment Code a statement of support for the application of positive actions to promote equality of opportunity. This will support people with disabilities who may otherwise have had difficulty gaining access to employment in the NICS.

The recent pandemic has shown how quickly the workforce can adapt to new ways of working and saw technology break down many barriers that once seemed impossible to navigate. Commissioners are keen that the NICS keeps this momentum going and builds adaptability into recruitment and retention strategies across the workplace. Commissioners acknowledge that flexibility, whilst beneficial to many employees, is a key reasonable adjustment that can help people with disabilities access and remain in employment in the NICS. Commissioners look forward to working with the NICS on the review of the Reasonable Adjustment Policy in 2023-24.

During the course of the 2022-23 reporting period, Commissioners attended the **Northern Ireland Leadership and Governance Conference** and took the opportunity to make useful networking connections. Commissioners were particularly interested in the concept of exploring the whole-system approach needed to transform public services and were keen to explore how they can support recruitment and selection within the NICS to support the long-term structural, economic and societal challenges facing the organisation. Commissioners believe that it will be through effective collaboration across the public sector and building of partnerships that the NICS will be able to deliver a sustainable and prosperous future.

Women into Leadership

Members of the Secretariat attended the **Women Into Leadership** conference in February 2023 where they heard from inspirational and motivational speakers from all over the UK, including what influences and drives many forward-thinking processes.

Both the Chairperson and Secretary attended a conference organised by the Equality Commission NI on **Making Equality a Priority – Equality Law Reform in NI.**

This conference focused on the need for a single Equality Act and the implications of Brexit and the NI Protocol on equality law.



COMMISSIONERS IN POST SINCE APRIL 2022

DEIRDRE TONER **CHAIRPERSON**

Throughout my career I have always believed that one of the most important obligations is to ensure that talented people, from a diverse community have the opportunity to fulfil their potential in a wide range of employment, irrespective of, for example, age, ethnicity, religion, gender or disability. It is vital that recruitment to the NICS is as accessible as possible to the people it serves, creating impartial recruitment and selection to support the long-term structural, economic and societal challenges facing the organisation.

In a time of uncertainty and transformation, this is more important than ever before. As a Civil Service Commissioner, I have the privilege of interviewing some of the brightest and best candidates and I am regularly energised and inspired by their passion and enthusiasm for making a difference to society. Their skills and ideas can improve the delivery of public services and I strongly believe that by applying the Merit Principle the best person for the position will be appointed.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is a great place to work, with a huge range of roles and opportunities which can provide the most rewarding career experience.



**Deirdre was appointed
1 June 2018 for a
five year period and
extended for a further 5
years, until May 2028.**

SINÉAD BURNS **COMMISSIONER**

I believe that objective, open, fair and transparent recruitment is essential to maintaining and building public trust in appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The work of NICS impacts in numerous ways on every single person in Northern Ireland and therefore it is imperative that on the basis of merit alone, the best and most talented people are appointed to the NICS.

I passionately believe that any public service should reflect the society it serves, in all of its diversity. NICS has invested significant effort into attracting and recruiting people from a wide a range of backgrounds and circumstances. This hard work and vision is to be commended. The development of initiatives such as the JobStart scheme, the Guaranteed Interview Scheme and the Civil Service Academy is to be welcomed and forms a strong foundation for expanding upon this valuable work into the future.



Sinéad was appointed on 8 March 2016 for a five year period and extended for a further 5 years, until 7 March 2026.

DR LESLEY CARROLL
COMMISSIONER

I have always believed in a professional, non-partisan public service where advancement is based solely on merit. I strongly support the core function of the Civil Service Commissioners to ensure that all appointments are on merit based on fair and open competition.

Historically, the Civil Service Commissioners have sought to encourage and support diversity and inclusion initiatives. I strongly believe that a diverse and inclusive workforce supports the Merit Principle and that fair and open competition should ensure that a wide and inclusive net is cast. How recruitment processes are applied is, therefore, important to me. The diversity of opportunity within the Civil Service is something to be cherished and it should be reflected by a diverse workforce. Diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity are all central to the Merit Principle and embedded within Commissioners' Recruitment Principles.



**Lesley was
appointed on 1 July
2022 for a five year
period.**

JIM SCHOLES **COMMISSIONER**

It is important to remember that Commissioners exercise a role independent of the NICS. This separation is important as it provides an element of independence in external recruitment campaigns.

As highlighted throughout this report the Merit Principle is fundamental to all appointments and the Recruitment Code interprets the Merit Principle and how this is applied to the recruitment process. Our auditing of this process encourages confidence in recruitment procedures and helps ensure the most suitable candidates are appointed.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as a Commissioner and wish my colleagues all the best. I have every confidence that they will continue to uphold and strengthen the core values and strategic priorities which are the guiding principles of the Commissioners.



**Jim was appointed
on 1 July 2012
and retired as a
Commissioner on 30
June 2022.**

COMMISSIONERS' SECRETARIAT AND RESOURCES 2022-23

Civil Service Commissioners for NI are sponsored and funded by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and work in accordance with a framework document agreed by both parties. The purpose of the framework document is to ensure that the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners (OCSC) operates under and complies with good governance arrangements and practice, and applicable regulatory requirements and expectations.

The NIO oversees the Secretariat's performance and sets its annual budget. The Secretary has responsibility for ensuring all financial management decision making is in accordance with HM Treasury Guidance on **Managing Public Money**.

In order to ensure compliance with their responsibilities the Secretariat regularly engaged with the NIO on matters such as governance and policy, and financial management and budget forecasting.

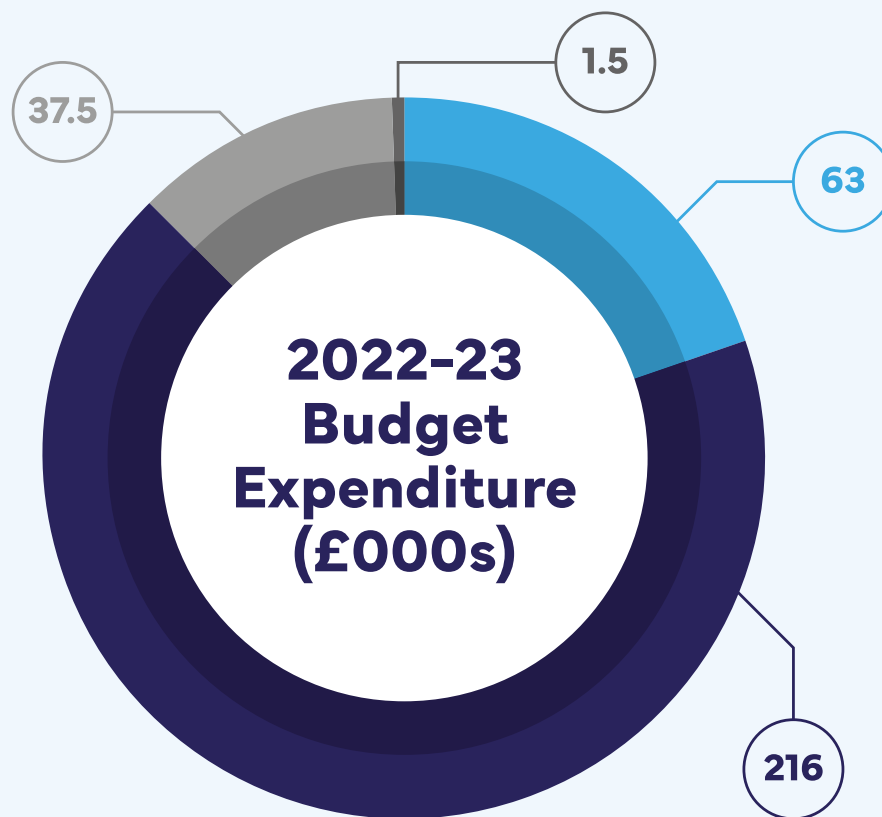
To deliver our statutory responsibilities we receive support from a Secretariat which in 2022-23 comprised five members of staff, four of whom were part-time and one was full-time, providing the equivalent of 4.2 full time employees (FTE).

Financial pressures across government have resulted in budget cuts for the Office of Civil Service Commissioners which has necessitated a reduction in staffing levels and financial resources. Going forward in 2023-24 the Secretariat will reduce to 3.3 FTE.

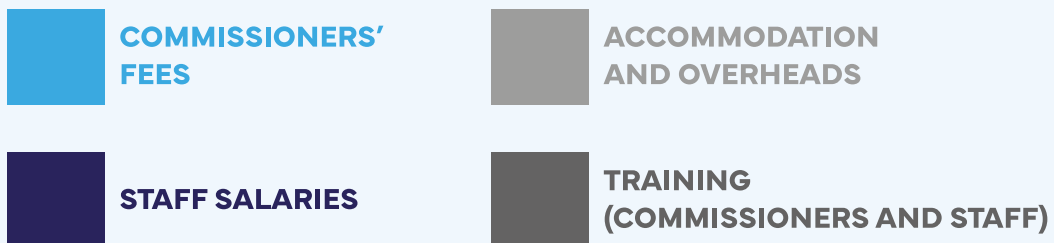
The OCSC will continue to seek new and innovative ways to support the delivery of Commissioners' statutory functions whilst ensuring good governance and best practice.

In 2022-23 the OCSC expenditure was under budget by approximately 0.5%.

2022-23 Budget Expenditure



Total: £318,000



ANNEX

Websites and Research

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

Recruitment to the NICS Annual Report 2022

[nics-recruitment-annual-report-2022.pdf \(nigov.net\)](#)

Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/analysis-nics-recruitment-competitions-2022>

Working together to
support the core values
of **integrity, honesty,**
objectivity and
impartiality

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Feedback

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Whilst this Report is a document of record it is important that it is also relevant and informative to the public. Should you have any comments regarding any aspect of the Report (e.g. content, layout etc.) the Civil Service Commissioners would be happy to receive them. Any such comments should be sent to the following address:

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