



CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ANNUAL REPORT 08-09



Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

08-09

CSC NI

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

We, Your Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland, present to Your Majesty this report on our work during the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009



Brenda McLaughlin, CBE
Chairperson



Mrs Ruth Laird



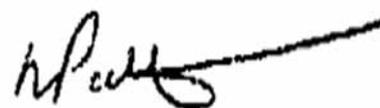
Mr Brian Carlin OBE



Dr Alan Lennon OBE



Dame Joan Harbison



Mrs Vilma Patterson MBE



Mr Alan Henry OBE



Mr Tony Hopkins CBE



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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

This has been another busy and productive year for Civil Service Commissioners. In addition to increased casework from Departments, in terms of both volume and complexity, we have also had a number of changes to our own membership.

I am delighted to welcome Tony Hopkins and Vilma Patterson who joined us as Commissioners in February 2009 and who bring with them a wealth of experience from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The appointment of new Commissioners helpfully followed the decision by Commissioners to re-examine what we do and how we do it and resulted in a very useful shared learning experience.

A major aspect of our role is to scrutinise and, where necessary, challenge NICS recruitment proposals and processes to ensure that the Merit Principle is upheld both in spirit and in practice. This year saw an increase in the number of requests from Departments for approval to make appointments by way of exceptions to merit. As Commissioners, we remain convinced that any such appointments must be rare and we grant approval only when there is strong and compelling evidence of the need to do so. We examined each proposal on its individual merits and in many cases were not persuaded by the arguments put forward and did not, therefore, grant approval.

In the period covered by this Report there was also a marked increase in the number of requests seeking our approval for Ministerial involvement in the process of appointments to the Senior Civil Service. While the Recruitment Code makes provision for a Minister to be involved in senior appointments to his or her Department, this has to be accommodated within strict guidelines. Individual appointments must be made on merit, free from personal or political partiality, so that appointees are able to serve Ministers of different political backgrounds. Throughout 2008/09 we continued to hold firmly to our position that

Ministerial interest must be limited to a small number of posts. Each request was scrutinised on an individual basis and we granted approval only when we were convinced that there were sound business reasons to support the case for Ministerial involvement.

For the public to have confidence in the process of recruitment to the NICS – and for us to do our job as regulators – it is vital that there is ready access to relevant and detailed information on recruitment-related activity. We understand that, because of changes in the way in which recruitment data is collected, the NICS encountered difficulties in presenting and reconciling data for 2007/08 and 2008/09.

Commissioners were frustrated by the delay in receiving details of recruitment-related activity during 2008/09 from the NICS. As a direct result, publication of this Annual Report was delayed significantly. The information for 2008/09 was received only recently. Consequently, we are not in a position to comment upon it in any detail in this Report. We will, however, scrutinise the information in due course and comment on it in our next Annual Report, as necessary.

As regulators, we were further dismayed to learn recently that the information made available to us by the NICS, for publication in our 2007/08 Annual Report, was incorrect. To avoid any confusion, the correct figures for 2007/08 have been reproduced as an Annex to this Report.

While the NICS has now provided us with final official recruitment figures for 2007/08 and 2008/09, we understand that it has not been possible for these figures to be validated. In our role as regulator, we find this situation unsatisfactory and have made our position clear to the Head of the Civil Service. He has assured us that action has been taken to ensure

that recruitment-related data held by the NICS is accurate, reporting systems work correctly, and that there will be no re-occurrence of the problems associated with these figures.

In light of these difficulties, we welcome the introduction of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 giving the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), through the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, a new statutory role in collating and publishing data which will be of particular relevance to us as Commissioners. From our perspective, this is a welcome development and we look forward to working closely with NISRA to specify our data needs and agree how these can best be met.

A key concern for us during the period of this Report has been the extent to which there was a common and shared understanding among our stakeholders as to the Commissioners' role and responsibilities and our expectations as articulated in the Recruitment Code. After discussion a decision was taken to review the Code. The current version of the Code has been operating since 2005 and we considered the time was right for it to be refreshed. While the broad principles of the Code remain relevant and appropriate, we feel that a greater degree of clarity would be helpful to ensure that all those who must comply with the Code understand fully its requirements and how these might be satisfied in practice. This will be a key area of the work we take forward into 2009/10.

It would be remiss of me not to reflect on the departure of four Commissioners since our last Report. Their experience, sound judgement and wisdom will be greatly missed by Commissioners and the Secretariat. Alan Lennon resigned in June 2008. Joan Harbison completed her first term of office in October 2009 and did not seek re-appointment. Brian Carlin and Alan Henry completed two terms of office and deferred their

departure until September 2009 to help facilitate the smooth induction of new Commissioners. We wish all our former colleagues well in their future endeavours.

Finally, on behalf of my fellow Commissioners, I should like to thank our loyal and dedicated Secretariat for the outstanding support, advice and guidance which they have continued to provide to each of us throughout the past year.

I very much hope that you find this Annual Report both interesting and informative. If you would like further information about any aspect of our work, you can visit our website at www.nicscommissioners.org or contact any member of the Secretariat who will be happy to help.



BRENDA McLAUGHLIN CBE
Chairperson

ROLE AS REGULATOR

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

ROLE AS REGULATOR

Who we are

Civil Service Commissioners are independent of Government and the Civil Service. We are appointed under, and derive our powers and responsibilities from, the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999. Commissioners are appointed on merit following public advertisement and fair and open competition and bring to the job wide experience from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The independence of Commissioners is fundamental to our role as regulator. Details of the Commissioners in post during 2008/09 are provided in **Annex A**.



CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS 2008/09

Our primary role is to regulate recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), at all levels, to ensure that the Merit Principle is adhered to, both in spirit and in practice.

What we do

Our primary role is to regulate recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), at all levels, to ensure that the Merit Principle is adhered to, both in spirit and in practice.

We discharge our statutory responsibilities by:

- maintaining the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition in relation to selection for appointment;
- 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 information relating to recruitment and the use of permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle.

We also have a role in hearing appeals made by existing civil servants under the NICS Code of Ethics. In exceptional circumstances, Commissioners may consider taking an appeal direct from the complainant.

The independence of Commissioners is fundamental to our role as regulator.

Working with the NICS

As Commissioners, we work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that the Merit Principle is understood and upheld. This is crucial to promoting public confidence in NICS recruitment. We regularly meet with the Head of the Civil Service, Permanent Secretaries and senior officials within Corporate HR (CHR), formerly Central Personnel Group, and seek to shape and inform recruitment policy and encourage best practice.

Each NICS Department is linked to particular Commissioners who hold meetings with the relevant Permanent Secretary and, on occasion, other senior officials. These meetings take place once a year and focus on current issues of common concern. Issues explored during the most recent meetings included:

- the pace of internal and external change;
- the importance of marketing and branding in attracting high-calibre candidates;
- addressing diversity considerations in recruitment;
- selection and assessment methods;
- the need to secure and maximise professional Human Resource (HR) advice and support throughout the recruitment and selection process;
- the role of HRConnect;
- Ministerial interest in senior competitions;
- the impact of the Review of Public Administration; and
- exceptions to the Merit Principle.

KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES WHICH AROSE DURING 2008/09

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The following paragraphs summarise the key strategic issues we explored during 2008/09.

AUDIT

The annual Audit Programme is one of the key regulatory tools used by Commissioners to establish whether or not the expectations of the Recruitment Code are being observed during NICS recruitment. The primary aim is to seek an assurance that the Merit Principle is being upheld. The 2008/09 Audit Programme focused on two key elements of the recruitment process, namely communication and training.

Communication Processes Audit

This Audit examined the extent to which the Recruitment Code expectations relating to communication were observed, namely to:

- ensure that the appointment process is not subject to undue delay, with reasons for any delay recorded;
- ensure there is a commitment for open, timely and effective communication to candidates, including clear and meaningful feedback when requested by candidates;
- allow panel members to raise concerns they may have about any aspect of a process; and
- ensure that enquiries and/or complaints are dealt with in an efficient, timely manner.

The annual Audit Programme is one of the key regulatory tools used by Commissioners.

Commissioners were pleased to note that the auditors found that many aspects of the communication processes were working effectively. The auditors reported evidence of a genuine commitment from all those involved in the recruitment process to make the candidate experience as positive as possible.

The Audit did, however, identify a number of issues which the auditors considered required critical and immediate attention. These included:

- the effectiveness of advertising;
- public perception of the NICS employer brand;
- the approach to candidate feedback; and
- the use of selection criteria in terms of the number of years' experience.

Commissioners were pleased to note that the auditors found that many aspects of the communication processes were working effectively.

We are pleased to report that a significant number of the Audit recommendations have been accepted by the NICS and indeed some have already been implemented. We will continue to discuss and explore any outstanding issues and monitor implementation of the NICS Action Plan which has been developed to take these forward.

Effectiveness of Training Audit

The Recruitment Code recognises that effective training for all those involved in the recruitment process is fundamental to safeguarding the Merit Principle. The purpose of this Audit was to examine the recruitment and selection training provided to those involved in NICS recruitment and consider the extent to which this satisfied the requirements of the Code.

A key finding of the Audit was that, while the training provided by the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) did provide what it was tasked with, namely criterion-based interview training to allow panel members to assess competently on an interview panel, the auditors concluded that it did not consistently cover all critical aspects of the wider recruitment cycle. This, the auditors found, led to gaps in knowledge for those involved in the process. The auditors also found that the training offered to various parties involved in the process was not joined up which led to inconsistency and a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the key contributors at each stage in the recruitment process.

Commissioners discussed the importance of recruitment training with the Head of the Civil Service. Our key concerns were:

- to ensure that the training provided covered the entire recruitment process and did not focus solely on the mechanics of interviewing;
- the importance of testing to ensure that the necessary skills transfer had occurred as a result of training; and
- to ensure that all those involved in the process had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and felt confident in their ability to contribute effectively in all relevant aspects of the process.

The Head of the Civil Service responded very positively to our concerns and we will watch progress with interest. In particular, we look forward to receiving the NICS Action Plan which will provide details of how the specific agreed recommendations in the Audit Report will be addressed.



NISRA REPRESENTATIVES MEET COMMISSIONERS

KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES WHICH AROSE DURING 2008/09

Diversity

Diversity and the Merit Principle go hand-in-hand. The importance of addressing diversity in recruitment was, therefore, a fitting topic for the focus of our annual meeting with the Head of the Civil Service and the NI Permanent Secretaries. From our perspective, we are keen to see proactive measures to:

- ensure that panels have appropriate advice from which to make informed decisions about potential measures to address diversity and potential adverse impact on a competition-by-competition basis;
- well thought-through and effective outreach measures to attract under-represented groups; and
- appropriate and meaningful feedback which will send out a clear message about the nature of the NICS as an employer.

Commissioners were pleased to hear that the NICS shared many of our concerns and is committed to looking at the issue of diversity in more detail to ensure that all that can be done to address diversity in recruitment happens in practice. This will continue to be an area of active interest for Commissioners in the coming year.

It is important that stakeholders, and crucially the public, understand our independence and regulatory role.

Communicating our role

In recent months, we have become increasingly aware of the need to ensure that there is a clear and shared understanding among key stakeholders regarding the Commissioners' roles and responsibilities. It is important that stakeholders, and crucially the public, understand our independence and regulatory role as this will be a key factor in promoting public confidence in recruitment to the NICS. An important outcome from our discussions in this area was a decision that the 2005 Recruitment Code should be reviewed. It is intended that this exercise, which is now underway, will ensure greater clarity for stakeholders as to the Commissioners' expectations and how these can best be satisfied in practice.

Internal SCS competitions

As Commissioners, we do not have a formal role in internal SCS competitions – our statutory role extends only to open recruitment. We have, however, on occasion been invited to chair a number of internal competitions. During 2008/09, we examined the potential merits of extending our chairing role to include internal SCS competitions on a more formal basis. Following detailed deliberations, we concluded that our role should not be extended in this way, particularly given that the Recruitment Code does not apply to internal competitions. We were concerned to ensure that our statutory role was not diluted by moving into areas not covered by the Code. We did, however, reach an agreement with the NICS that Departments would continue to consult us about any decisions to fill SCS posts by way of internal competition.

2008/09 Business Plan

The objectives and targets we set for 2008/09 were detailed in our Business Plan. Progress against the Plan was monitored and reviewed regularly throughout the year and discussed on a quarterly basis. The key outputs achieved during the year are summarised in **Annex B**.

RECRUITMENT TO THE NICS DURING 2008/09

RECRUITMENT TO THE NICS DURING 2008/09

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 regarding recruitment to the NICS. Placing this information in the public domain improves the accountability of Departments and Agencies, ensures openness and transparency and encourages public confidence in recruitment to the NICS. The detailed information is published in the Annual Reports of the Agencies and of the NICS Appointments and Marketing Branch.

Publication of the Commissioners' Annual Report has been significantly delayed due to difficulties which the NICS encountered in producing recruitment-related data for 2008/09. Commissioners only received this information in recent weeks and were not, therefore, in a position to comment on it in any detail in this Report. We will, however, scrutinise the information in due course and comment on it in our next Annual Report, as necessary.

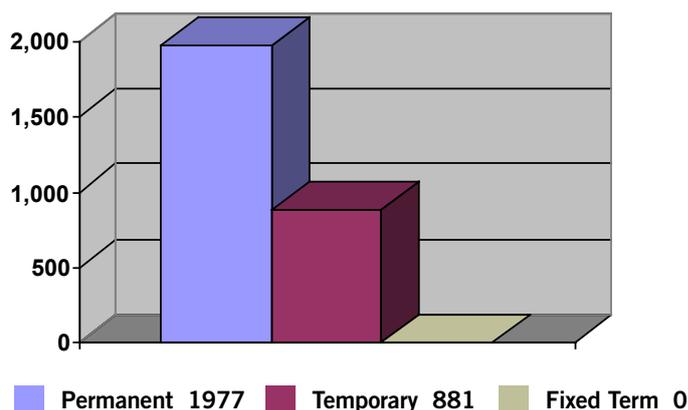
Summaries of the key information for 2008/09 are provided in **Figures 1 – 3** below, including appointments by type and a breakdown of the number of applications and appointments to the various occupational groups. We welcome the fact that the NICS is now able to provide this information by gender and declared disability and look forward to further analysis by other Section 75 categories in future years.

As regulators, we were dismayed to learn recently that some of the information made available to us, by the NICS, for publication in our 2007/08 Annual Report, was incorrect. To avoid any confusion, the correct figures have been reproduced at Annex C to this Report. However, previously published data relating to recruitment to the Senior Civil Service during 2007/08 is accurate and has not, therefore, been reproduced.

During 2007/08, the NICS amended the definitions of occupational groups to more closely reflect categories which generally apply to labour market analysis throughout the United Kingdom. **Figure 3** provides details of appointments made to these new categories during 2008/09. Comparative figures for 2007/08 are provided in Annex C. For information, examples of the grades which fall within each group, pre and post 2007/08, are provided in Annexes D and E along with details of the appointments made to the previous categories during 2006/07.

While the NICS has now provided final official recruitment figures for 2007/08 and 2008/09, we understand that it has not been possible for these figures to be validated. As regulators, we find this situation most unsatisfactory. We have made our position on this clear to the Head of the Civil Service. He has assured us that action has been taken to ensure that recruitment-related data held by the NICS is accurate, reporting systems work correctly, and that there will be no re-occurrence of the problems associated with these figures. Commissioners will actively monitor this situation going forward and robustly challenge the NICS to collate and publish recruitment-related information in an accurate and timely manner.

Figure 1
2008/09 appointments by type



RECRUITMENT TO THE NICS DURING 2008/09

08-09

Figure 2

2008/09 applications¹ by occupational group

Group	Total	Gender				Declared Disability	
		M	%	F	%		%
Managers & Senior Officials	330	224	68	106	32	7	2
Professional Occupations	1304	680	52	624	48	21	2
Associate Professional & Technical Occupations	4829	2658	55	2171	45	94	2
Admin & Secretarial Occupations	18392	8450	46	9942	54	578	2
Skilled Trades Occupations	111	91	82	20	18	1	1
Personal Service Occupations	183	72	39	111	61	4	2
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	186	171	92	15	8	0	0
Elementary Occupations	5870	4558	78	1312	22	173	3
Total Applications	31205	16904	54	14301	46	878	3

Figure 3

2008/09 applications² by occupational group

Group	Total	Gender				Declared Disability	
		M	%	F	%		%
Managers & Senior Officials	21	15	71	6	29	0	0
Professional Occupations	269	125	46	144	54	5	2
Associate Professional & Technical Occupations	324	207	64	117	36	6	2
Admin & Secretarial Occupations	2055	1053	51	1002	49	56	3
Skilled Trades Occupations	8	6	75	2	25	0	0
Personal Service Occupations	6	4	67	2	33	0	0
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	18	18	100	0	0	0	0
Elementary Occupations	157	141	90	16	10	6	4
Total Applications	2858	1569	55	1289	45	73	3

¹ This relates to all applications received during 2008/09 although some competitions may not have been completed during that period

² This relates to all appointments made during 2008/09 and may relate to competitions which were initiated in the previous year

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS DURING 2008/09

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS DURING 2008/09

As Commissioners, we chair the recruitment panels for all SCS open competitions and our involvement begins at the very early planning stages. We attend initial scoping meetings with senior Departmental representatives to discuss and shape the job description and person specification. We are closely involved in all aspects of the competition design, including agreeing the eligibility and short-listing criteria, the assessment process and interview questions and associated indicators. This direct involvement enables Commissioners to ensure that all aspects of the competition process support and promote the Merit Principle and gives us first-hand experience of how the process works in practice.

During 2008/09, Commissioners chaired 15 open competitions, which resulted in 21 appointments to the SCS - details are provided in **Figure 4**. This is a notable increase on the previous year when there were only seven appointments to the SCS made via open competition.

Of the 21 appointments to the SCS in 2008/09, two (10%) were external applicants to the NICS. In 2007/08, two (29%) of seven appointments were external applicants and in 2006/07 it was six (30%) of 20 appointments – details are provided in **Figure 4**.

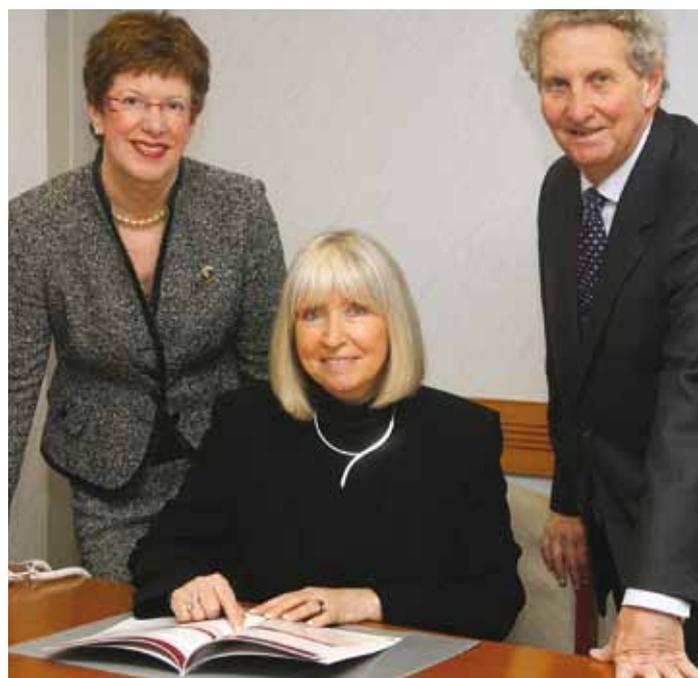
Six of the appointees (29%) were female. The comparable figures for 2007/08 and 2006/07 were two (29%) and seven (35%). A summary of total applications and appointments by community background from April 2006 to March 2009 is provided at **Figure 5**.

A total of 237 applicants, 179 (76%) male and 58 (24%) female, were attracted to apply for SCS posts during 2008/09. The comparable figures for 2007/08 and 2006/07 were 202, 128 (63%) male and 74 (37%) female and 209, 154 (74%) male and 55 (26%) female – details are provided in **Figure 6**.

For the first time we are able to present a breakdown of recruitment to the SCS by declared disability – details are provided in **Figure 7**. We look forward to monitoring trends in future years.

In addition, two internal SCS competitions were chaired by a Commissioner during 2008/09. There was also one open competition which did not result in an appointment as none of the applicants met the eligibility criteria.

We are closely involved in all aspects of the competition design - this direct involvement enables Commissioners to ensure that all aspects of the competition process support and promote the Merit Principle.



VILMA PATTERSON, BRENDA MCLAUGHLIN AND TONY HOPKINS

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS DURING 2008/2009

08-09

Figure 4

Senior Civil Service appointments: April 2008 - March 2009

Department	Job Title	Applications			Appointments			Comments / Notes
		M	F	Total	M	F	Internal or External candidate	
Finance and Personnel	Deputy Head of Legal Services DSO	3	1	4	1	0	Int	
	Director of Central Procurement Directorate	12	0	12	1	0	Int	
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	Head of NICS	7	2	9	1	0	Int	
Regional Development	Chief Executive Road Service	10	0	10	1	0	Int	
DRD & DHSSPS	2 x Senior Finance Directors DRD & DHSSPS	28	9	37	1	1	2 x Int	
Regional Development	Director of Water Policy	8	1	9	1	0	Int	
Culture Arts and Leisure	Chief Executive to The Public Records	5	5	10	0	1	Int	
DCAL, SSA & DRD	3* x Finance Directors	32	13	45	2	3	5 x Int	*3 initial appointments. A further 2 appointments were subsequently made from the merit list
Environment	Director of Strategic Planning	4	4	8	1	0	Int	
Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Senior Medical Officer (Maternity & Child Health)	0	2	2	0	1	Int	
Agriculture and Rural Development	Chief Executive River Agency	13	0	13	1	0	Int	
	Department Scientific Advisor	10	2	12	1	0	Ext	
Education	Chief Inspector of Schools	4	4	8	1	0	Int	
Social Development	Director of HR DSD and Director of HR & Corporate Service, DEL	31	15	46	2	0	1 x Int 1 x Ext	
Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Director of Economics and Statistics	12	0	12	1	0	Int	
Total		179	58	237	15	6	2 x External 19 x Internal	

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS DURING 2008/2009

Figure 5

SCS applications and appointments by community background³: April 2006 - March 2009

Year	Applications				Appointments			
	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Not Determined	Total	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Not Determined	Total
2008/09	109 (46%)	115 (49%)	16 (5%)	237	14 (67%)	*	*	21
2007/08	86 (43%)	104 (51%)	12 (6%)	202	*	*	*	7
2006/07	108 (52%)	88 (42%)	13 (6%)	209	11 (55%)	*	*	20

Figure 6

SCS applications and appointments by gender: April 2006 - March 2009

Year	Applications			Appointments		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2008/09	179 (76%)	58 (24%)	237	15 (71%)	6 (29%)	21
2007/08	128 (63%)	74 (37%)	202	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	7
2006/07	154 (74%)	55 (26%)	209	13 (65%)	7 (35%)	20

Figure 7

SCS applications and appointments by declared disability⁴: April 2006 - March 2009

Year	Applications	Appointments
2008/09	6	0
2007/08	0	0
2006/07	N/A	N/A

³ In keeping with guidance from the Equality Commission, where community background figures are less than 10, these are not shown

⁴ Breakdown by declared disability is only available from 2007/08 onwards

EXCEPTIONS TO THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

EXCEPTIONS TO THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

The Recruitment Code recognises that there may be circumstances which warrant appointments being made without following the Merit Principle. Any such appointments must be rare and there must be strong and compelling grounds to justify such an approach. Commissioners actively scrutinise and challenge any requests from Departments on a case-by-case basis and only grant approval when we are fully satisfied that this is both necessary and appropriate. There were a number of cases during the period of this Report where, following detailed consideration of the circumstances presented, we concluded that the requirements of the Recruitment Code had not been satisfied and we did not, therefore, grant approval.

During 2008/09, we were asked to consider nine requests to approve appointments by way of exception to the Merit Principle. These included:

- three requests for secondments to fill temporary vacancies in Departments. Two were for a period of one year and another was for nine months. After careful consideration of the business cases, we approved all three requests. In one of the cases, an appropriate secondee was not identified and the vacancy was subsequently filled via open competition;
- three requests for extensions to existing secondments. One request sought a six-month extension to a secondment, below SCS-level, which had already lasted two years. Another was for a one-year extension to a secondment that had originally been requested for two years and the third was for an extension of 20 months. After detailed scrutiny of all three requests, we were persuaded that the business arguments put forward were relevant and appropriate and we were, therefore, content to grant approval;
- two requests sought approval to appoint individuals on the basis of their proven distinction and exceptional reasons relating to the needs of the Civil Service. The first case related to five individuals who were deemed to be direct employees of a Department. The second related to three former members of the NICS. Based on the information provided, we were not persuaded that either proven distinction or exceptional reasons justified by the needs of the NICS had been established in either case and so approval was not granted. For us to consider granting approval, there would need to be strong evidence explaining why it would not be possible to meet the business need via an open competition and therefore make the appointments in line with the Merit Principle. It would also be difficult to envisage circumstances in which the proven distinction test could be applied to a group rather than to individuals; and
- one request was received seeking approval to appoint a senior official to the SCS following a public appointment process. After a detailed examination of the case presented, we concluded that the case did not fall within the categories of permitted exceptions prescribed in the Commissioners' General Regulations 2007. For this reason, approval was not granted.

While the specific approval of Commissioners is required for some appointments by exception to merit, the Recruitment Code does permit Departments to make appointments via exception to merit in certain limited circumstances. Departments and Agencies reported a total of 16 appointments made as exceptions to the Merit Principle during 2008/09. The comparable figures for 2007/08 and 2006/07 were 28 and 27, respectively.

Figure 8 presents a breakdown of the appointments made by exception to merit, by category, and illustrates that the vast majority continue to fall into category (a) which permits short-term secondments into the NICS.

Figure 8

Appointments made by exception to merit: April 2006 - March 2009

Exception Category	Number of appointments: April 2006 - March 2007	Number of appointments: April 2007 - March 2008	Number of appointments: April 2008 - March 2009
(a) Secondment	25	21	12
(b) Transfer from another civil service of the crown	1	2	2
(c) Transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred	0	5	1
(d) Exceptional needs of the NICS	0	0	1
(e) Appointments made under Government initiatives/programmes	1	0	1
(f) Reinstatement	0	0	0
Total	27	28	16

PROMOTING EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

PROMOTING EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS

As a public authority, we are committed to fulfilling our obligations to promote equality of opportunity and good relations under Section 75 of, and Schedule 9 to, the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Our Equality Scheme and related Implementation Plan set out how our obligations will be fulfilled. Copies of both documents are available on our website at www.nicscommissioners.org

In June 2009, we submitted our annual report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) demonstrating the progress made in implementing our Equality Scheme during 2008/09. Our 2008/09 Business Plan included an objective to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and a commitment to achieve the targets set in the Good Relations Strategy. New guidance on the revision of Equality Schemes is being introduced on a phased basis, and on advice from ECNI, we are due to update our Scheme in line with any new requirements during 2009/10. In the meantime, we will continue to operate the existing Scheme and monitor progress accordingly.

During the year, and working closely with a representative from ECNI, we revised our Disability Action Plan. This Plan sets out actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life. During this review, we revised the action measures to ensure there was greater focus on actions that would achieve practical outcomes, bearing in mind our focused remit. We included performance indicators, outcomes and impact statements in our annual report to the Equality Commission. A copy of the revised Disability Action Plan is available on our website at www.nicscommissioners.org

Promoting equality and good relations is also a keen concern for the staff within our Secretariat. The importance of this is reflected in the forward job plans and personal development plans of each member of staff and these are reviewed every six months. The Secretariat's Training Plan also identifies opportunities to ensure that all staff are aware of the statutory duties and are kept informed of new developments and emerging case law.



JONATHAN PHILLIPS, BRUCE ROBINSON AND BRENDA MCLAUGHLIN

NICS CODE OF ETHICS

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

NICS CODE OF ETHICS

The NICS is governed by a Code of Ethics which requires civil servants to act with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. If a civil servant is aware of actions by others which he or she considers to be in conflict with the Code, the concern can be raised within their Department under an internal complaint process. If the civil servant is unhappy with the outcome of the internal process we, as Commissioners, may decide to hear an appeal. In exceptional circumstances, we may consider taking a complaint direct from a civil servant without the person first going through the internal process.

During 2008/09, we were contacted on two occasions regarding potential breaches of the Code of Ethics. After detailed consideration of each case, and informed by legal opinion, we concluded that the information, as presented, did not provide evidence that the Code had been breached. In both cases, the concerns raised focused on allegations of irregularities involving employment-related procedures and processes. These were, therefore, matters for the relevant Department to consider.

A key purpose of the Code is to provide civil servants with a mechanism to raise matters of concern in relation to the civil service values in circumstances where no alternative complaints process exists.

The Code is not an appropriate mechanism for dealing with employment-related complaints. More appropriate mechanisms are available to address these.

Commissioners are primarily concerned about issues which have a public interest dimension and might potentially impact on any public confidence in the civil service. We have no remit in relation to internal employment issues.

Where there is overlap or ambiguity as to whether a complaint should be considered under the Code of Ethics or other employment-related procedures, such as those relating to harassment, bullying or discrimination, we consider it prudent, in most cases, to await the outcome of any internal or external procedure before considering if there may have been a breach of the Code. This is important so as not to jeopardise any ongoing process, regardless of the outcome of that process.



MEETING IN HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE WITH THE GB COMMISSIONERS

LINKS WITH OTHERS

LINKS WITH OTHERS

As Commissioners, we place a great deal of importance on establishing and maintaining effective relationships with key stakeholders in order to share experiences, expertise and learn from existing good practice. In addition to our links with the Head of the Civil Service and the NI Permanent Secretaries (outlined on page 7) we also work closely with our counterparts in GB and ROI to explore issues of mutual interest and concern.

During 2008/09 we had three very helpful meetings with GB Commissioners when we explored a wide range of issues including:

- the potential impact of the draft Constitutional Reform Bill;
- diversity in recruitment;
- the approach to audit; and
- the handling of potential appeals under the Code of Ethics.

Unfortunately it was not possible to meet formally with ROI Commissioners during 2008/09, although the respective Secretariats have kept in touch. A formal meeting between the two groups of Commissioners will be held in 2009/10.

Throughout 2008/09, we continued to look for opportunities to engage with a wide range of stakeholders to learn of their work and of any recent developments which might inform and shape our activities. During the year, this included meeting with representatives from the Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission, NI Consumer Council, NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and senior officials in the Northern Ireland Office. Each of these sessions proved to be very fruitful in terms of a two-way exchange of views and experiences and they were also an effective means of sharing information about our respective roles and responsibilities.



GB COMMISSIONERS VISIT 2008

ANNEXES

COMMISSIONERS IN POST DURING 2008/09



Chairperson: Brenda McLaughlin, CBE

Brenda was first appointed in May 2006 and reappointed in May 2009 for a further period of 3 years. She is a graduate of Queen's University Belfast, where she served as Pro-Chancellor for eight years, until December 2007. She was appointed to the Public Service Commission in 2006 and retired as a Director of Ulster Bank in June 2009.

Brenda was the first Chair of South and East Belfast HSS Trust, a position she held for nine years until 2001, and also served as a Non Executive Director on the Departmental Board of the Northern Ireland Office for five years, until June 2006.

She was Chair of the Opportunity Now Campaign (NI) for nine years, is a former Board Member of Business in the Community and of the BBCNI Broadcasting Council.

Brenda was appointed to the Board of the Ulster Orchestra in 2008 and has also served on the Executive Councils of Action Cancer, Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke Association and Extern.



Brian Carlin, OBE (until September 2009)

Brian, appointed in 2002, worked for 43 years in Bombardier Shorts, before retiring as Executive Vice President in 1996. In October 1996 he was appointed Chairman of the Central Services Agency and served for a period of seven years. He also served on the Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) from 1997-2006. Brian was appointed to the Equality Commission in August 2003.

He serves on the Board of Maydown Precision Engineering in Derry and other interests include acting as a Trustee for the Bytes Project, the Bombardier Shorts Charitable Foundation and the Bombardier Shorts Pension Fund.



Dame Joan Harbison (until October 2009)

Joan was appointed on 1 October 2006. She was a teacher and lecturer professionally and has extensive experience of public and voluntary service in Northern Ireland. She was the Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland until July 2005 and previously Vice Chair of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board and the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR). She was a member of the General Dental Council for the United Kingdom and of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority as well as serving on the Financial Services Authority Consumer Advisory Panel.

Joan was actively involved in the Northern Ireland Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux for many years and was its Chair from 1994 to 1995. She was a member of the NI Judicial Appointments Commission until January 2009 and a member of the Health and Personal Social Services Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority until March 2009. She was, until her appointment as Older People's Advocate for Northern Ireland in December 2008, Chair of Age Concern Northern Ireland and a Trustee of Age Concern England.



Alan Henry, OBE (until September 2009)

Alan, appointed in 2002, was Head of Human Resources at Royal Mail. He is currently an HR consultant, specialising in recruitment and selection, equal opportunities and diversity. Alan is a Human Rights Commissioner and a former Commissioner of the Equality Commission. He is an Industrial Tribunal panel member and an assessor for the Office of Public Appointments. He is also an Assessor for the National Patient Safety Authority.



Anthony Hopkins, CBE (appointed 2 February 2009)

Tony chaired the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council from 2002 until late 2009. He was Chair of Laganside Corporation from 1997 until 2007 when Laganside completed its task of securing the regeneration of the riverside area of Belfast and Cathedral Quarter. He was a public servant for 21 years working in the field of industrial development first in the Northern Ireland Development Agency and later with the former Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland where he was Chief Executive from 1988 until 1992.

From 1992 – 2001 he became Senior Partner of Chartered Accountants Deloitte in Belfast. He was NI Chair of the Chartered Institute of Management for six years. He has served on the Boards of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and of the NI Probation Service. He is currently Chair of Ulster Garden Villages, a large local charitable and philanthropic organisation.



Ruth Laird

Ruth was first appointed on 1 June 2006 and reappointed in June 2009 for a further period of 3 years. She has over 20 years experience in the field of human resource management and organisational development, working in the public, private and voluntary sectors. She was formerly Director of the National Trust NI and Head of Personnel, BBC (NI) and was a Fair Employment Commissioner until June 1999.

Ruth is a chartered member of the Institute of Personnel and Development. She is currently a member of the NI Judicial Appointments Commission; a member of the Health and Personal Social Services Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and a Non Executive Director of the NI Transport Holding Company and the NI Prison Service. Ruth is also a Board Member of Business in the Community and a member of the Council of the University of Ulster (appointed from 1 October 2009).



Alan Lennon, OBE (until 30 June 2008)

Alan was appointed on 1 October 2006. He has an extensive senior management background in both the private and public sectors over 25 years and has active business interests in Northern Ireland. He currently Chairs 3 local companies and is an active Business Angel investor and management consultant. He is a Non Executive Director of Invest Northern Ireland.

He retains strong links with education from his previous work as Chair of the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and with research as previous Chair of the Research and Education Advisory Panel of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. He is also a Board Member of Business in the Community.



Vilma Patterson, MBE (appointed 2 February 2009)

Vilma has spent over 30 years in the construction industry, in sports ground construction, consultancy, research and network development and is Director of John G Duff (Annadale) Ltd. She was a member (1996 to 2008) and Chair (1999 to 2002) of the Independent Monitoring Board for HMP Maghaberry and Chair of Association of Members of Independent Monitoring Boards for Northern Ireland for five years. She is also the former Chair of the Women in Business Network working with the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. She is currently a member of the Parades Commission.

1. POLICY & OUTPUTS

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
1.1 To be an exemplary regulator	During 2008/09, promote and encourage partnership working with similar bodies to share knowledge and experience and develop closer relationships with other regulators.	<p>Liaise on a regular basis with GB and ROI Commissioners to share knowledge, experience and expertise on issues of common concern</p> <p>Arrange a formal annual meeting with GB Commissioners</p> <p>Arrange a formal annual meeting with ROI Commissioners</p> <p>Invite representatives of other regulatory bodies to attend Commissioners' business meetings to share experience and knowledge</p> <p>Examine the Commissioners' statutory role and consider if there is a need to re-position Commissioners in the role of regulator and how best this might be communicated</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed – meeting took place on 13 October 2008</p> <p>Deferred until September 2009</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed – this work will continue during 2009/10</p>
	During 2008/09, continue to work closely with the NICS to understand key issues and work in partnership to find and implement effective solutions.	<p>Facilitate at least 3 meetings with representatives of Central Personnel Group (CPG)</p> <p>Facilitate 1 formal meeting with the full Permanent Secretaries' Group (PSG)</p> <p>Facilitate 2 formal meetings with the PSG Sub-group</p>	<p>Addressed – four meetings held during 2008/09</p> <p>Addressed – held on 30 January 2009</p> <p>Addressed – held on 7 March and 31 October 2008</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
	During 2008/09, continue to build on the relationship between Commissioners and the NI Permanent Secretaries	<p>Maintain the regular programme of Links meetings between Commissioners and NI Permanent Secretaries and follow the agreed common agenda</p> <p>Maintain a series of relevant key messages which Commissioners should seek to promote at Links meetings</p> <p>Commissioners to produce a short record of each Links meeting and share with colleagues</p> <p>Secretariat to scrutinise the records of Links meetings and draw Commissioners' attention to key concerns and any emerging trends</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p>
1.2 To guard the Merit Principle and promote public confidence in recruitment to the NICS.	During 2008/09, ensure that appointments to the NICS are made in line with the Merit Principle.	<p>Commissioners to chair all SCS recruitment competitions and ensure commonality of approach by using the agreed Chairperson's Checklist</p> <p>Secretariat to scrutinise all SCS appointments in line with the agreed 4-stage approval process</p> <p>Agree and implement the 2008/09 Audit Programme to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Recruitment Code</p> <p>Work with the NICS to ensure implementation of the recommendations contained in audit reports</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed – all checks made, as required, in line with the agreed approval process</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
		<p>Monitor and report on (in the Annual Report) all appointments made by way of exception to the Merit Principle and scrutinise and challenge any such requests which require Commissioners' approval</p> <p>Liaise with the NICS to consider what role Commissioners might formally have in relation to internal SCS competitions</p> <p>On an annual basis monitor trends in SCS appointments, including, for example, timescales and the use of internal – v external approaches</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p>
	<p>During 2008/09, work in partnership with the NICS and other key stakeholders to develop and implement guidance on effective short-listing and assessment methods for use in SCS competitions.</p>	<p>Facilitate a series of workshops with representatives of CHR and HRConnect to develop guidance which draws on the experience and best practice in other organisations</p> <p>To work with CHR to ensure the development of appropriate guidance and training in these areas and, in particular, on the effective use of Professional Skills for Government</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>On track – work on this will continue into 2009/10</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
	During 2008/09, proactively seek to raise awareness of the Commissioners' role and responsibilities	<p>Maintain the regular programme of meetings with PSG, the PSG Sub-group, CHR and Links meetings with NI Permanent Secretaries.</p> <p>Produce and publish an Annual Report by 31 July 2008</p> <p>Contribute to any re-launch of the NICS Code of Ethics</p> <p>Consider the need to engage direct with the NI Executive and MLAs</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed – 2007/08 Annual Report was published on 5 November 2008</p> <p>Not applicable – no formal launch was arranged by the NICS</p> <p>On track</p>
	During 2008/09, examine the need to undertake a review/refresh of the 2005 Commissioners' Recruitment Code	By end December 2008, to have considered the need to review/refresh the Code and, if appropriate, schedule into the 2009/10 programme of work	Addressed – a review of the Code has been included in the 2009/10 programme of work
1.3 To promote equality, diversity and good relations in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998	During 2008/09, support the NICS to ensure that equality, diversity and good relations are effectively promoted in NICS recruitment processes	Through the Commissioners' Diversity Sub-group, work closely with CHR to: (a) support the development of an effective Employment Equality & Diversity Plan for the NICS; and (b) better define the diversity information to be made available to panels at the outset of competitions, particularly with a view to improving the quality and reach of recruitment advertisements to under-represented groups	<p>On track –</p> <p>a) Commissioners contributed to the development of the draft Employment Equality and Diversity Plan</p> <p>b) work on this will continue into 2009/10</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
	<p>During 2008/09, proactively seek to raise awareness of the Commissioners' role and responsibilities</p>	<p>Work with the NICS to ensure implementation of the recommendations in the Attracting Candidates Audit</p> <p>Consider NICS Article 55 Review Reports, as submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), and, as appropriate, discuss with the NICS</p> <p>Encourage the NICS to examine the scope for research into the recruitment experiences of SCS candidates with a view to understanding their expectations and concerns and, in particular, to identifying barriers for applicants from under-represented groups</p>	<p>Addressed – work on this will continue into 2009/10</p> <p>Deferred – there was no NICS Article 55 Review Report published during this period</p> <p>Addressed – NICS encouraged to reflect this in their Employment Equality and Diversity Plan</p>
	<p>Throughout 2008/09, ensure that Commissioners effectively fulfil all their statutory equality responsibilities</p>	<p>Within the required timescales, undertake a review of the Commissioners' Equality Scheme following the publication of relevant guidance by ECNI</p> <p>By end September 2008, submit to ECNI an Annual Report on the implementation of the Commissioners' 2007/08 Equality Plan and include a report on the implementation of the Commissioners' Disability Action Plan</p> <p>Monitor implementation of the Commissioners' Good Relations Strategy</p>	<p>Deferred – until 2009/10 in line with ECNI advice</p> <p>Addressed – Annual Report issued to ECNI on 19 September 2008.</p> <p>Addressed – monitored on a quarterly basis</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
1.4 To safeguard the NICS Code of Ethics	During 2008/09, ensure a considered and timely response to any requests to Commissioners to consider potential complaints under the NICS Code of Ethics	<p>Establish improved procedures for the handling of potential complaints under the Code of Ethics and, when finalised, arrange appropriate training for all Commissioners and staff</p> <p>Ensure all potential complaints are dealt with promptly</p> <p>Encourage the NICS to identify and maximise opportunities to use recruitment literature to promote awareness of the Code of Ethics, the core values, and the Commissioners' role in relation to the Code</p>	<p>Under review – work on this will be progressed during 2009/10</p> <p>Addressed – all cases progressed in line with agreed procedures</p> <p>Addressed – work on this will continue during 2009/10</p>

2. PEOPLE

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
2.1 To provide effective strategic leadership and direction	By April 2008, ensure that the strategic priorities and annual objectives for 2008/09 are finalised and effectively communicated to all Commissioners, staff and other key stakeholders.	<p>Publish the Business Plan on the Commissioners' website no later than 1 April 2008</p> <p>Ensure that all staff fully understand the commitments in the Plan and their role in contributing to its effective delivery – this should be appropriately reflected in all Forward Job Plans</p>	<p>Addressed – published on the website on 1 April 2008</p> <p>Addressed</p>
	Ensure regular and effective monitoring of progress towards agreed 2008/09 targets.	Establish and implement quarterly reviews of progress towards in-year targets for consideration by Commissioners	Addressed
	Ensure effective and timely forward planning beyond 2008/09.	Facilitate a business planning day in Autumn 2008 to review and refresh the strategic priorities and develop annual objectives for 2009/10	Addressed
2.2 To provide appropriate training and continuous professional development for Commissioners and staff and maintain a well-managed and motivated Secretariat	By end April 2008, develop and begin to implement an appropriate training and development plan to meet the needs of Commissioners and staff	Identify training needs of Commissioners and staff and develop a Plan to address these during 2008/09	Addressed
		<p>By March 2009, develop and implement an appropriate programme for new Commissioners and staff and make arrangements for any specific training requirements, as necessary</p> <p>Monitor in-year changes in training needs and adjust Plan accordingly, paying particular attention to any emerging issues in relation to equality / legislative responsibilities</p>	<p>Addressed – a four day Induction Programme was developed and delivered between February and May 2009</p> <p>Addressed – reviewed quarterly</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
2.3 To ensure line managers fulfil their people responsibilities effectively	Throughout 2008/09, ensure that all managers and staff effectively fulfil their responsibilities in line with NIO performance management processes	<p>Ensure staffing levels are maintained and any necessary succession planning is effectively managed</p> <p>Provide appropriate support to colleagues in the NIO to ensure effective succession planning for the appointment of 3 new Commissioners by April 2009</p> <p>Any new staff joining the team should be provided with effective induction training and have Forward Job Plans agreed within 2 months</p> <p>The Chair should undertake regular reviews of performance with individual Commissioners in line with agreed procedures</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>On track</p>
2.4 To fully comply with the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order and other relevant employment legislation	<p>To provide a safe and healthy working environment for all staff and visitors.</p> <p>To ensure safe access and egress to and from the place of work.</p> <p>To ensure compliance with relevant employment legislation.</p>	<p>Ensure that all operational and emergency procedures are in place and effectively communicated</p> <p>Ensure that staff are adequately trained, fire drills are practised and safety procedures are circulated to staff and publicly displayed</p> <p>Ensure that staff are aware of all relevant employment legislation and attend appropriate training in line with NIO requirements</p>	<p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed – a four day Induction Programme was developed and delivered between February and May 2009</p> <p>Addressed – reviewed quarterly</p>

3. FINANCE

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
3.1 To make the best possible case to secure the resources needed to enable Commissioners to achieve their 2008/09 business objectives	Throughout 2008/09, secure the necessary resources to support delivery of the Commissioners' 2008/09 Plan	Establish resource requirements	Addressed
		Submit timely bids in appropriate NIO financial monitoring rounds in line with the Comprehensive Spending Review process	Addressed
3.2 To shape, steer and challenge the deployment and management of available resources so as to secure maximum efficiency and value for money in the achievement of business objectives	Throughout 2008/09, to live within baseline allocation	Monitor expenditure in-year through analysis of reports and monthly meetings	Addressed
	Throughout 2008/09, report in line with monitoring timescales and participate in efficiency reviews to achieve savings, where possible	Monitor current and future resource requirements and provide early warning of potential problems	Addressed
3.3 To effectively fulfil responsibilities to account for the expenditure of resources and performance against objectives.	Throughout 2008/09, monitor progress against achievement of objectives and report quarterly to Commissioners	Review expenditure on a monthly basis	Addressed
		Comply with all appropriate financial monitoring requests from NIO within agreed timescales	Addressed
		Provide Commissioners with a quarterly report on progress towards annual Business Plan	Addressed

4. PROCESSES

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
4.1 To provide high-quality, timely support and advice to Commissioners to enable them to deliver on their statutory responsibilities	Throughout 2008/09, provide appropriate support to facilitate Commissioners' meetings.	Produce and circulate agendas, papers and briefing material no less than one week prior to meetings	Addressed
		Produce and circulate draft minutes promptly following meetings	Addressed
		Liaise regularly with the Chairperson to ensure Commissioners' needs are being met	Addressed
		Formally seek feedback from Commissioners, on an annual basis, to review the service delivery and support provided by the Secretariat and encourage Commissioners to provide informal feedback throughout the year	Addressed
	Throughout 2008/09, provide accurate and timely advice to Commissioners in relation to requests from the public, civil servants, the NIO, NICS Departments and others, as and when required.	Produce high-quality submissions to Commissioners which take account of key issues and which at all times seek to protect and promote the Commissioners' integrity, independence and professionalism in regulating NICS recruitment and upholding the Code of Ethics	Addressed
		Obtain legal advice, as required	Addressed
		Develop and implement appropriate arrangements to record and monitor response times	Addressed

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
4.2 To facilitate effective corporate governance	Throughout 2008/09, establish and implement effective corporate governance arrangements	By April 2008, develop, and agree with Commissioners, a 2008/09 Risk Register	Addressed
		Review the Risk Register, in terms of completeness and the status of risks, and report to Commissioners on a quarterly basis	Addressed
		Ensure that all staff are trained in, and effectively operate, all appropriate NIO financial management procedures	Addressed
		Review effectiveness of protocols for internal and external engagement at alternate business meetings	Addressed
4.3 To evaluate our effectiveness and to learn from others	During 2008/09, seek to ensure that key policies, processes and procedures are sufficiently robust and fit for purpose	Ensure that all existing policies, processes and procedures are properly documented	Addressed
		Engage with GB Commissioners and other relevant organisations to inform a re-positioning of the Commissioners in the role of regulator	Addressed
4.4 To facilitate effective communication with key stakeholders	To ensure effective lines of communication with key stakeholders are established and maximised throughout 2008/09	Implement the agreed annual schedule of meetings with PSG, the PSG Sub-group, Permanent Secretaries (via Links meetings), CPG and GB and ROI Commissioners	Addressed
		By 31 March 2009, undertake a stakeholder analysis to inform potential consultation during 2009/10	Under review – this will be revisited in 2009/10 when work on the re-positioning is finalised

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
		<p>Seek opportunities to engage with HRConnect representatives so as to establish a good working relationship with key players as the new HR arrangements 'bed-in'</p> <p>Maintain a professional web presence, regularly reviewing and updating content to ensure relevance, appropriateness and ease of access</p> <p>Engage with other relevant key stakeholders as and when the need / opportunity arises including: the NI Executive; MLAs; trade union representatives; the Public Service Commission; NIO; other public bodies (for example, the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA), the ECNI, the Human Rights Commission); the NI Consumer Council; the media and the public</p>	<p>Addressed – work on this will continue into 2009/10</p> <p>Addressed</p> <p>Addressed</p>
	<p>Throughout 2008/09, ensure that Commissioners effectively fulfil their obligations in relation to a Publication Scheme</p>	<p>Within the required timescales, undertake a review of the Commissioners' Publication Scheme following publication of relevant guidance</p>	<p>Addressed</p>

BUSINESS PLAN END YEAR POSITION - 31 MARCH 2009

Objectives	Targets	Actions	End Year Position
4.5 To continually seek to improve internal electronic records management, particularly with a view to responding to requests for information	To continue to develop branch information processes to make best use of OASIS	Proactively keep up-to-date with developments in relation to the Oasis electronic filing system and effectively manage and maintain the system	Addressed
	To deal effectively with any Freedom of Information requests within agreed NIO timescales	Maintain efficient monitoring and information retrieval arrangements	Addressed
	To fully comply with new NIO data handling requirements	To raise awareness among Commissioners of the importance of this issue and provide them with NIO encrypted laptops and confidential storage facilities	On track
4.6 Review files in line with NIO requirements	To ensure all paper and electronic files are updated and disposed of as necessary	Periodically review files in line with NIO guidelines	Addressed

NICS RECRUITMENT DURING 2007/08

Figure 9

2007/08 appointments by type

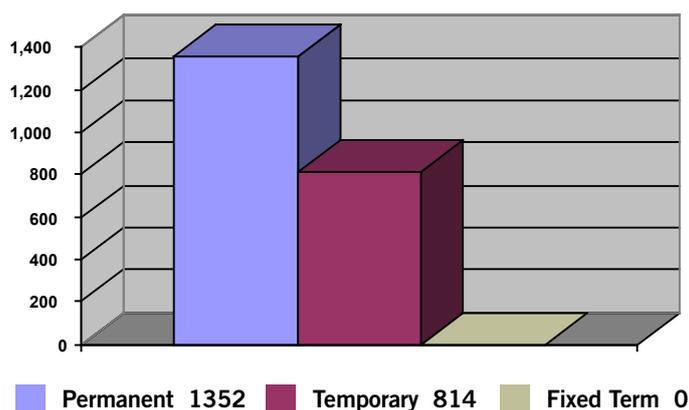


Figure 10

2007/08 applications⁵ by occupational group

Group	Total	Gender				Declared Disability	
		M	%	F	%		%
Managers & Senior Officials	363	232	64	131	36	3	1
Professional Occupations	2575	1325	51	1250	49	56	2
Associate Professional & Technical Occupations	2998	1551	52	1447	48	66	2
Admin & Secretarial Occupations	16383	7070	43	9313	57	594	4
Skilled Trades Occupations	17	17	100	0	0	0	0
Personal Service Occupations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elementary Occupations	1041	733	70	308	30	53	5
Total Applications	23377	10928	47	12449	53	772	3

⁵ This relates to all applications received during 2007/08 although some competitions may not have completed during that period

Figure 112007/08 appointments⁶ by occupational group

Group	Total	Gender				Declared Disability	
		M	%	F	%		%
Managers & Senior Officials	7	5	71	2	29	0	0
Professional Occupations	240	115	48	125	52	7	3
Associate Professional & Technical Occupations	200	135	67	65	33	2	1
Admin & Secretarial Occupations	1691	821	49	870	51	68	4
Skilled Trades Occupations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Personal Service Occupations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elementary Occupations	28	21	75	7	25	1	4
Total Applications	2166	1097	51	1069	49	78	4

⁶ This relates to all appointments made during 2007/08 and may include competitions which were initiated in the previous year

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS FOR NICS RECRUITMENT PURPOSES FROM 2007/08 ONWARDS

For recruitment purposes there are 9 occupational groups. Examples of grades within these groups are as follows:

Figure 12

Occupational groups - 2007/08 onwards

Occupational Group	Example Grades
Managers and Senior Officials	Grade 5 and above
Professional Occupations	Biological scientists, civil engineers, veterinarians, solicitors
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	Laboratory technicians, engineering technicians, IT user support technicians, careers advisers
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	AA, AO, EO, Typists
Skilled Trades Occupations	Electricians, agricultural and fishing trades, motor mechanics
Personal Service Occupations	Nursing assistants, playgroup leaders, travel and tour guides
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	Sales and retail assistants
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	Road construction operatives, driving instructors
Elementary Occupations	Messengers, labourers, road sweepers, cleaners

New Standard Occupational Codes (SOCs) have been used by the NICS with effect from 2007/08 and reflect the categories which generally apply for labour market analysis throughout the United Kingdom

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS FOR NICS RECRUITMENT PURPOSES DURING 2006/07

08-09

Figure 13
2006/07 appointments by occupational group

Occupational Group	Example Grades	Number of Appointments 1 April 2006 - 31 March 2007
General Service Grades	Graduate Recruitment, Administrative Officer, Administrative Assistant	1869
Secretarial Grades	Typist	0
Scientific Grades	Scientific Officer, Fisheries Officer, Fuel Technologist, Microbiologist	122
Technology Grades	Graduate Trainee Quantity Surveyor, Electrical Engineer, Architect, Trainee Civil Engineering Assistant, Tracer	169
Legal Grades	Legal Assistant, Law Clerk	49
Computer Grades	Programmer, Programmer Analyst, Systems Analyst	15
Other Professional & Departmental Grades	Graduate Trainee Valuer, Inspector of Schools, Nursing Officer, Statistician, Vehicle Inspector, Veterinary Officer	307
Centralised Services Grades	Cleaner, Messenger, Security Guard, Telephonist, Laboratory Attendant	21
Industrial Grades	Road Worker, Industrial Technician, Porter, Farm Worker, Labourer, Fish Farm Assistant	113
	Total	2665

2008/09 RESOURCES AND BUDGET SPEND

To deliver our statutory responsibilities we receive support from a Secretariat which comprise the following officials:

Secretary: Rosemary Crawford

Grade 5 (part-time)

Deputy Secretary: Joanne Dowling

Grade A (part-time)

Iris Lovell

B1

Gareth Wright

(Declan Leonard until 1 October 2009)

B2

Jacqui Dawson

(Maureen Tipping until 1 November 2009)

Grade C

Mae Hamilton

D1 (part-time)

2008/09 Budget Spend

Item	(£000s)
Commissioners' Fees*	48
Audit Contract	24
Staff Salaries	215
Accommodation and overheads	85
Training (Commissioners and Staff)	5
Total	377

* Includes fees related to attendance at training events

08-09



**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

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