

CSC NI

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

CSC NI
11-12
ANNUAL REPORT

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics



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Office of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland

5th Floor
Windsor House
Bedford Street
Belfast BT2 7SR

Alternatively, please e-mail the Commissioners at:

info@niccommissioners.org

11-12

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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 2011 to 31 March 2012

Brenda McLaughlin CBE
Chairperson

Ms Marion Matchett CBE

Mrs Ruth Laird

Dr Raymond Mullan OBE

Mr Tony Hopkins CBE

Mrs Vilma Patterson MBE

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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

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

I join the Commissioners at a time when a number of key milestones have been achieved and the groundwork has been firmly established to reinforce our role as regulators of Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) recruitment. This is testament to the drive and dedication of my predecessor Brenda McLaughlin, CBE. Brenda and her fellow Commissioners, both past and present, have much to be proud of as they pass on the baton, if you'll forgive the metaphor in this Olympic year, at a time of step-change in the approach of Commissioners to their role.

Perhaps the most notable achievement in the past year has been the publication of the Revised Recruitment Code which sets out Commissioners' expectations and requirements to uphold the principle of appointment to the Civil Service on merit, and on the basis of fair and open competition. I am very impressed with the new Code, and strongly believe in the value of being firm on principle but flexible on process.

Alongside the very impressive work on the Code, Commissioners developed and piloted a revised approach to audit. This work goes to the very heart of our role as a regulator and its significance should not be underestimated in terms of establishing a mechanism which provides robust assurance to Commissioners and thereby promoting public confidence in recruitment to the NICS.

This report also shows that the routine work of the Commissioners has continued successfully. The report contains details in relation to our key areas of business, including: recruitment to the NICS and it is heartening to see recruitment embargos lifted and a reviewed focus on external competitions; details in relation to the requests handled by Commissioners to approve

appointments by way of exception to merit; and the development of our new Equality Scheme. It also sets out the key achievements in relation to the revised approach to audit, the initial work on the pilot audit; and the launch of the Code.

This very impressive body of work would not have been possible without the insight, tenacity and dedication of the Commissioners, past and present, supported by the small team of officials who comprise the Secretariat. As Brenda McLaughlin, my immediate predecessor, and Ruth Laird leave the Commissioners after completing two 3-year terms of office and Tony Hopkins steps down after completing a 3-year term of office in February, it is important to acknowledge their individual and collective contributions. They have personified the standards of public life which we all strive to uphold and have created a legacy that will endure as a testament to their integrity and professionalism. Colleagues will join with me in wishing them continued success in their future endeavours.

Whilst we will undoubtedly miss the experience and contribution of those Commissioners who are moving on, I am delighted to welcome Mr James Scholes who will join Commissioners on 2 July 2012. Together we are looking forward to working with our Commissioner colleagues to take our role into the next era with fresh perspective and energy. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my new colleagues and fellow Commissioners Marion Matchett, Raymond Mullan and Vilma Patterson for their tremendous support since my arrival and whose experience and knowledge we will draw upon, particularly during this period of transition.

I should also like to pay tribute to our staff in the Secretariat team. They are a small team, managing a large capacity of work on our behalf, led by Heather Stevens, who took up post in September 2011.

Looking ahead, a key focus for me in the coming year is to establish a strong and constructive relationship with the Head of the Civil Service, the NI Departmental Permanent Secretaries and a range of external stakeholders. I am looking forward to working closely with NICS senior management towards achieving the shared goal of ensuring NICS recruitment and selection processes and practices are fit for purpose and to guarding the principle of selection on merit.

I am immensely proud to inherit the role of Chairperson of the Civil Service Commissioners at this time and I am determined to lead the work in a way which builds on the achievements and ambitions of Commissioners past and present.

I hope 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 the Secretariat who will be happy to respond to your queries.



BRIAN ROWNTREE CBE
Chairperson

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2011/12 Annual Report serves to highlight the work of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners for the period April 2011 – March 2012. The last year has seen many developments and milestones reached, all of which lend themselves to improvements in our role as regulators and in relation to the recruitment and selection processes and procedures of NICS.

One of the key events during the last year has been the **launch of a revised Recruitment Code**. The new Code provides greater clarity, particularly around Commissioners' expectations as to how the Code should be interpreted and applied. The adoption of this Code by NICS has also led to an update of the relevant policies and procedures.

The Commissioners role also includes **audit** as a significant tool in our regulatory toolkit. During this year we developed further our new approach, in particular, producing an Audit Guidance and Framework document to be used as a primary tool going forward and commenced work on a pilot audit into the area of Inward Secondment as an Exception to Merit, in order to help test and refine the new approach. Audit continues to be a priority for Commissioners as it helps provide evidence that the requirements of the Recruitment Code are being implemented in practice and the revised approach focuses more on promoting improvement.

In the current year, Commissioners have attached particular importance to the area of Equality. We reviewed and updated our **Equality Scheme** and submitted it for approval by the Equality

Commission. This piece of work reflects our commitment to fulfilling our obligations to promote equality and good relations.

As regulators of recruitment, we continually monitor recruitment to the NICS and have a primary role in chairing SCS Competitions. **Statistical data** is provided to Commissioners annually and this year we are pleased to report that our reporting requirements were met in a timely manner.

The **Code of Ethics** falls within the Commissioners statutory remit; this report notes that in the current year no such cases were submitted to the Commissioners.

Commissioners place a great deal of importance on **relationship building** and throughout 2011/12 we have not only maintained relationships with key stakeholders but established many new relationships. We have attended events and meetings to share experiences and learn about best practice across the UK and Ireland which has helped inspire our work. We continue to engage on a regular basis with the NICS which is essential in our role as regulator.

As a public authority the Commissioners are not only keen to **promote diversity** but to fulfil our statutory disability duties and this has been reflected on in this report. The Commissioners have incorporated objectives and targets in their Disability Action Plan and continue to engage with the appropriate authorities on such matters.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Who we are

Civil Service Commissioners are individually appointed by Royal Warrant to exercise the powers and responsibilities set out in the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999. Sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office, we are entirely independent of Government and the Northern Ireland Civil Service and we guard that independence fervently.

In essence we are regulators: our main purpose is to regulate recruitment to the NICS, at all levels, to ensure that in every case, the most suitable candidate is appointed to the job. This is what we refer to as the 'Merit Principle'. We ourselves are appointed following public advertisement and fair and open competition and we bring to the job wide experience from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Details of all Commissioners in post during 2011/12 are provided in **Annex A**.

What we do

The 1999 Order confers on us a statutory responsibility to:

- act as guardians of the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition;
- make General Regulations which prescribe the circumstances in which the Merit Principle shall not apply;
- publish and maintain a Recruitment Code on the interpretation and application of the Merit Principle;
- audit recruitment policies and practices followed in making appointments to the Civil Service to establish whether the Recruitment Code is being observed; and
- require the publication of specified information relating to recruitment and to 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.

Our Strategic Plan

We are in the second year of our current three-year Strategic Plan which sets out our strategic priorities for 2011-2014 and our annual objectives and targets for 2011/12.

Our strategic priorities are:

- to be an exemplary regulator, guard the Merit Principle, promote equality and diversity, examine complaints under the NICS Code of Ethics and thereby promote public confidence in recruitment to the NICS;
- ensure the work of the Commissioners is led strategically in order that they can fulfil effectively their role and responsibilities;
- secure, deploy and account skilfully and effectively for the financial and other resources made available to Commissioners; and
- strive for innovation and continuous improvement in the working methods, systems and procedures adopted by Commissioners in discharging their statutory role and responsibilities.

In delivering on these priorities, **key achievements** during this year were:

- the publication of the revised Recruitment Code on the interpretation and application of the Merit Principle;
- the introduction of a revised approach to auditing NICS recruitment policies, practices and procedures;
- a pilot audit using the revised approach; and
- the review of our Equality Scheme which was published for consultation.

These are considered in more detail within the relevant sections of this report.

All of our key corporate governance and policy documents, including our Strategic Plan, Annual Business Plan and Equality scheme can be found on our website at www.nicscommissioners.org.

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REPOSITIONING REGULATION

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

REPOSITIONING REGULATION

As a regulator of one of the biggest public sector employers in Northern Ireland, we have to be responsive to the changes in the wider political, business and social environment as this sets the context for recruitment to the NICS. We have worked hard to re-position our role as that of a regulator and we are striving to deliver ‘right touch’ regulation.

As a result, 2011/12 saw the culmination of a number of pieces of work - significant milestones which have been under development for some time - namely the finalisation of the revised Recruitment Code and the introduction of a revised approach to audit. The ambition of both these pieces of work has been to ensure that Commissioners’ regulatory role is at the leading edge of best practice and that it forms the central core of our work, rather than an ancillary function. A key goal in audit has been to focus on promoting improvement and celebrating best practice as well as determining compliance with the Code.

The Recruitment Code

The Recruitment Code¹ is the key document which Commissioners publish and which sets out the standards and expectations in relation to recruitment to the NICS. It is, in effect, the ‘recruitment bible’ from which all NICS policies, procedures and practices must flow.

Following a period of consultation with our stakeholders and partners last year, we came to the view that the vast majority of the original principle-based Code published in 2005, remains relevant and appropriate. The clear message we were given was that we needed to evolve the Code rather than radically re-shape it. Any changes that were seen to be necessary have been aimed therefore at providing greater clarity so that all those involved in the recruitment process may understand better the requirements of the Code and how these might be satisfied in practice. Our review focused on a number of important

issues including, in particular, the expectations of Commissioners; the circumstances necessary for these to be satisfied; and how the Code should be interpreted and applied.

Key changes to note in the 2012 Code relate to:

- the arrangements for Ministerial involvement in appointments which are now more tightly circumscribed;
- greater clarity of Commissioners’ expectations around training for panel members;
- greater clarity in relation to the requirements of those appointments made by way of exception to the Merit Principle;
- the provision of clearer definitions of terms used in the Code, so that, for example, “merit”, “fair” and “open” are now defined; and
- clarifying that, in addition to adhering to the Recruitment Code, all appointments to the NICS must comply fully with all of Northern Ireland’s equality and anti-discrimination legislation and the associated statutory Codes of Practice.

The revised Code and a copy of the consultation response document are available on the Commissioners’ website at www.nicscommissioners.org.

Audit: A Revised approach

Audit is one of the main tools in our regulatory toolkit which we can use to establish whether or not the Recruitment Code and its principles are being observed in both the interpretation and application of the Merit Principle during NICS recruitment. It provides an important independent challenge function, the primary aim of which is to seek an assurance that the Merit Principle is being upheld.

¹Published on 23 April 2012

As detailed in last year's Report, to build on the revised Recruitment Code, we decided to examine the approach to audit. Drawing on the support and expertise so willingly given by our benchmark partners, we developed an Audit Framework which will be used as a template to seek evidence-based assurance that the Code is being observed by the NICS. In addition, detailed audit guidance material has been developed to ensure the audit process is consistent and transparent.

To test the revised approach a pilot audit was carried out to examine the issue of inward secondment as an exception to the Merit Principle. Following a comprehensive audit training process, we undertook, for the first time, the role of auditors ourselves. In contrast to our work on the Recruitment Code, which could be described as evolutionary, our approach to audit has been described by partners as rather revolutionary. Certainly it has given us a unique insight into NICS policies and practices and brought the requirements of the Recruitment Code to life. We look forward to reviewing what was a very innovative hands-on approach to the audit function, in next year's Report. Nevertheless, we consider this work on audit to be a strategic priority over the next three years. The findings of the Pilot Audit, which we carried out across six of the Northern Ireland Departments, can be found on our website at www.nicscommissioners.org. It is also worth noting that during the course of the audit, errors were identified in the reporting of the number of secondments during the period under review. The correct figures relating to the last three years have been included in Figure 1 on page 20.

Other key achievements

As a public authority, another key achievement during the year was the review and update of our **Equality Scheme**. This major exercise followed a public consultation process and is reported in more detail below. Commissioners attach particular importance to issues of equality and diversity which go to the very heart of the merit principle and we have sought to reflect our commitment to fulfilling our obligations to promote equality and good relations. A copy of the revised Scheme will be published on our website in the coming year, following endorsement by the Equality Commission.

Commissioners also began to consider the issue of **selection and assessment** and undertook some exploratory work to learn about the latest methodologies used in the public and private sectors and reviewed current recognised best practice. A number of sessions were held, led by experts in the field and we were delighted to be joined by senior colleagues from NICS Corporate HR. Commissioners will consider in the forthcoming years how best to build on this initial work.

A further key achievement in this year has been the work with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to establish clearly the parameters for providing **statistical information** to us, as is required under our legislative mandate, supported by high quality analysis and commentary. The findings for 2011/12 are reported in the 'Monitoring recruitment' section.

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MONITORING RECRUITMENT

The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 and the Commissioners' Recruitment Code (Appendix C) 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 enables Commissioners to carry out their role in monitoring recruitment; improves the accountability of Departments and Agencies; ensures openness and transparency; and encourages public confidence in recruitment to the NICS.

Recruitment-related information for the calendar year of 2011² is contained in the Annual Report on Recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2011 published by the Department for Finance and Personnel. This report also includes an analysis by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) of NICS Recruitment Competitions during the same period which can be downloaded at

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions.html](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Analysis_of_NICS_Recruitment_Competitions.html) of [NICS Recruitment Competitions 2011.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Analysis_of_NICS_Recruitment_Competitions.html).

Overview of recruitment to NICS

Commissioners are aware that measures implemented in 2010 to manage surplus staff in the NICS, which included a temporary embargo on recruitment and promotion to the administrative general service grades, continued during the first half of 2011. This embargo was removed from July 2011. However, during 2011, NICS continued to recruit and appoint staff to professional and specialist grades, which were not affected by the embargo; they also continued to recruit at Senior Civil Service level.

Summary:

For the period, 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011, 60 recruitment competitions for permanent NICS jobs were held. The total number of valid applications received was 14,143. By 1 May 2012, a total of 226 appointments had been made from 46 of these competitions, while no appointments had yet been made from the remaining 14 competitions.

Over the same period, 5 recruitment competitions for temporary or fixed-term NICS jobs were held. The total number of valid applications received was 154. By 1 May 2012, a total of 33 appointments had been made from 4 of these competitions, while no appointments had yet been made from the remaining competition.

The NISRA report provides an overview of the recruitment of staff to the NICS, analyses of applicants across various equality categories and compares the profile of appointees with what might be expected if the applicant groups within each equality category had been equal in merit. Further analysis is presented in the report relating to the various stages of recruitment competitions between application and appointment.

The NISRA report provides an overview of the recruitment of staff to the NICS, analyses of applicants across various equality categories and compares the profile of appointees with what might be expected if the applicant groups within each equality category had been equal in merit. Further analysis is presented in the report relating to the various stages of recruitment competitions between application and appointment.

²From 1 April 2010, NICS recruitment-related data has been reported on a calendar-year basis to bring the reporting period into line with other reports on equality information.

Commissioners welcome the establishment of the **NICS Strategic Resourcing Board (SRB)** and its role in providing strategic direction on staff resourcing, including recruitment. We note the development of the first Strategic Resource Plan which covers the period 2011-2015 and the stated intention to ensure a systematic approach to planning and preparing for corporate recruitment competitions. We particularly welcome the fact that the SRB will examine areas of under-representation in terms of gender and community background, analyses and lessons learned from previous recruitment exercises, best practice in the use of assessment tools and techniques and continuous improvement in recruitment processes to ensure the best candidates are selected for posts. Over the course of the forthcoming year we will work closely with NICS colleagues in Corporate Human Resources to engage with the SRB in our capacity as the main regulator of NICS recruitment.

NISRA Report – Main Findings

Recruitment competitions for NICS jobs for the period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011(permanent and temporary/fixed-term)

- Over the period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011, 65 (60 permanent and 5 temporary/fixed-term) recruitment competitions for jobs in the NICS were held. The total number of valid applications received was 14,297.
- A majority of applicants were male (52.2%), while females represented 47.8% of applicants. In terms of community background, around half of all applications received were from Catholics (49.9%), 44.8% from Protestants and 5.3% from applicants whose community background was not determined. The proportion of applications from minority ethnic groups was 1.1% and the proportion of applicants who declared a disability was 3.1%. In terms of age, over a quarter of applicants (27.4%) were aged 16-24, while fewer than one in twenty applicants were aged 50 or over (4.2%). Approximately one in four applicants reported that they had dependants (24.7%). In terms of sexual orientation, 97.5% of applicants stated their orientation was towards someone of a different sex, with 1.9% reporting orientation towards someone of the same sex and 0.6% reporting orientation towards both sexes. One in five applicants (21.2%) reported they were a current NICS employee, with 7.1% reporting that they had previously been an NICS employee and 71.7% reporting no NICS employment history.
- By 1 May 2012, a total of 259 appointments had been made from 50 of the 65 competitions, while no appointments had been made from the remaining 15 competitions.
- Included in the figures reported above are nine competitions for permanent jobs in the Senior Civil Service. A total of 152 valid applications were received for these competitions. Four out of five candidates (80.5%) reported that they had never been an NICS employee. By 1 May 2012, a total of five appointments had been made from five of the competitions, while no appointments had been made from the other four competitions.
- The analysis shows that for the recruitment competitions held in 2011, the profile of appointees was broadly similar to what would be expected, if the applicant groups within each equality category had been equal in merit. The exception, however, is the age profile, with more appointees than expected in the 25-34 age group and fewer appointees than expected in the other age categories.
- Comparison of the profile of candidates **invited to interview** with the expected profile, based on those candidates who remained available for shortlisting reveals that fewer than expected female candidates and more than expected males were invited to interview. The analysis also shows that more Protestants and fewer Catholics than might be expected were invited to interview, although the difference between the actual and expected figures is less than for gender. Fewer than expected candidates with a disability were invited to interview. In terms of age, fewer candidates aged 35-49 or 50+ were invited to interview. Fewer than expected applicants who were existing NICS staff were invited to interview.

- At interview stage, the profile of candidates who **passed the interview** was compared with the profile that would be expected based on the profile of those who attended interview. The analysis shows only small differences in terms of gender, community background, disability and NICS employment history. However the analysis also reveals that more candidates than expected in the 25-34 age range were successful at interview.

Senior Civil Service Recruitment

As Commissioners, we chair the recruitment panels for all Senior Civil Service (SCS) open competitions and our involvement begins at the very early planning stages. We attend initial scoping meetings with senior Departmental representatives to discuss the job descriptions and person specifications. We are involved closely in all aspects of the competition design, including agreeing the eligibility and short listing criteria, the assessment process and the interview questions and associated indicators. This direct involvement, which incorporates a 4 stage authorisation process, 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.

Summary SCS recruitment related data is included in the NISRA Report –Main Findings detailed on page 17 and can also be accessed via the web link www.nisra.gov.uk.

The Recruitment Code makes provision, on an exceptional basis, for Ministerial involvement in senior appointments. It is important that any such involvement should be accommodated within a system which ensures that individual appointments are made on the basis of merit, free from personal or political partiality, so that the public may be reassured that the appointees may serve Ministers of different political backgrounds. This is important in order to safeguard the non-partisanship of the Civil Service and to ensure that recruitment decisions are free from political influence. Commissioners' approval was sought for Ministerial

involvement in only 1 of the 9 senior competitions during the 2011 calendar year. The request related to all aspects permissible under the 2005 Recruitment Code in operation at the time and following scrutiny of the business argument put forward, we were content to grant approval.

Exceptions to Merit

The Recruitment Code allows for circumstances which warrant appointments being made as exceptions to the Merit Principle. However, as guardians of the Merit Principle, we believe that any such appointments should be rare and should be justified by strong and compelling grounds. We scrutinise and challenge all requests from Departments on a case-by-case basis and grant approval only when we are satisfied fully that an appointment is both necessary and appropriate.

During 2011/12, we were asked to consider **six** requests to approve appointments by way of exception to the Merit Principle. A summary of the requests is outlined below:

- two requests, under Regulation 3(a) to grant approval for the secondment for a period of two years for SCS staff at Grade 5 level. After careful consideration of the business case submitted we were content to grant approval for both;
- one request for an extension to an existing secondment below SCS level. After careful and detailed scrutiny, we were persuaded that the business case put forward was relevant and appropriate and were, therefore content to grant approval; and
- three requests were received from one Department, under Regulation 3(b) to seek approval for SCS staff within HCS to transfer across into the NICS. Approval was granted for all three on the basis of the exceptional circumstances surrounding the devolution of Policing and Justice and we were satisfied that the individuals involved were originally selected on merit.

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, at grades below Senior Civil Service, for periods of up to two years. Departments and Agencies are required to publish, annually, details of such appointments. During the calendar year 2011, Departments and Agencies reported a total of 8 appointments made as exceptions to the Merit Principle. The comparable figures

for 2010/11 and 2009/10 were 871 and 26, respectively. **Figure 1** presents a breakdown of the appointments made by exception to merit, by category. Commissioners note that the sharp decrease in the use of exception (a) and (b) was as a result of the devolution into the NICS of Policing and Justice function which took place in the previous 2010/11 year. Excluding these figures, there continues to be a reduction in the number of appointments made by exception to merit.

Figure 1

Appointments made by exception to merit: April 2009 – December 2011³

Exception Category	Number of appointments: April 2009 – March 2010	Number of appointments: April 2010 – March 2011	Number of appointments: January 2011 – December 2011 ⁴
(a) Secondment	17 ⁵	30 ⁶	6
(b) Transfer from another civil service of the crown	0	842 ⁷	0
(c) Transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred	19	0	0
(d) Exceptional needs of the NICS	1	0	0
(e) Appointments made under Government initiatives / programmes	0	0	1
(f) Reinstatement	0	0	1
Total	37	872	8

³The data presented in this table is management information provided by NI Departments and does not fall within the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

⁴The figures provided relate to the calendar year of 2011 and reflect the change in reporting practice by NISRA and DFP and overlaps for the period (Jan – Mar 2011).

⁵This figure has been adjusted from the figure of 6 reported in last year's Annual Report, following work on the Pilot Audit.

⁶This figure includes 25 secondments from the Northern Ireland Office to the Department of Justice upon the devolution of Policing and Justice on 12 April 2010 and has been adjusted from the figure of 29 reported in last year's Annual Report, following work on the Pilot Audit.

⁷Northern Ireland Court Service staff transferred into the NICS upon devolution of Policing and Justice on 12 April 2010.

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UPHOLDING THE NICS CODE OF ETHICS

Ensuring appointment on merit & safeguarding ethics

UPHOLDING THE 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 s/he considers to be in conflict with the Code, s/he can raise this within the Department under an internal complaints process. If the civil servant is unhappy with the outcome of the internal process s/he may refer the complaint to Commissioners, who 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.

Commissioners are concerned primarily about issues which have a public interest dimension.

Where there is an 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, Commissioners consider it prudent, in most cases, to await the outcome of any internal or external procedure before making a determination regarding a possible breach of the Code. This approach is taken so as not to jeopardise any ongoing process, regardless of the outcome of that process.

During this reporting period, no approaches were made to Commissioners regarding potential breaches of the Code of Ethics.

CSC NI

VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS/ LEARNING FROM OTHERS

VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS/ LEARNING FROM OTHERS

As Commissioners, we place a great deal of importance on establishing and maintaining effective relationships with 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 NICS Permanent Secretaries we also work closely with our counterparts in Great Britain (GB) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) to explore issues of mutual interest and concern.

As part of the benchmarking phase of the review of our approach to audit, we engaged with a number of other regulators and bodies, including the NI Ombudsman, Criminal Justice Inspection, the Civil Service Commission for GB, Commissioners for Public Service Appointment for the ROI, the Public Service Commission of Canada, the Education and Training Inspectorate, the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and a large private sector chartered accountancy business. This proved to be a most valuable learning exercise and one which has informed the development of our revised approach to audit. It has also established for us a valuable network of public and private sector partners with whom we plan to continue to engage in order to promote mutual learning and the sharing of best practice.

Throughout 2011/12, we continued to seek opportunities for engagement with a wide range of other stakeholders who might inform and influence our work. During the year, there were meetings with NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the Crown Solicitor, representatives from the ECNI, Corporate Human Resources (CHR), NICS Departmental Human Resources Directors, senior officials in the Northern Ireland Office, the Public Appointment Service in the ROI and Fujitsu as a third party shared service provider to NICS.

Working with the NICS

As Commissioners, we work closely with the NICS to ensure that the Merit Principle is understood and upheld. This work is crucial in promoting public confidence in NICS recruitment. We meet regularly with the Head of the Civil Service, Permanent Secretaries and senior officials within Department of Finance and Personnel, CHR, in order to influence and inform recruitment policy and encourage best practice.

Matters explored during the most recent meetings included:

- the need to balance financial cuts while securing future talent pools;
- the added value of devising sound selection and assessment methods which allow the potential of candidates to be explored properly and effectively;
- Ministerial involvement in appointments to the Senior Civil Service;
- the Commissioners' approach to auditing NICS recruitment policies and practices; and
- the importance of effective, appropriately tailored, training for panel members and those involved in the recruitment process.

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PROMOTING DIVERSITY

PROMOTING DIVERSITY

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 current documents are available from our website at www.nicscommissioners.org.

In July 2012, we presented our annual report to the ECNI outlining the progress made in implementing the Equality Scheme during 2011/12. As part of the Equality Commission's planned phased introduction of the new arrangements, we were asked to submit our revised Equality Scheme by 1 May 2012. The draft Equality Scheme was put out for public consultation on 12 December 2011 with a closure date of 16 March 2012. All comments were considered by Commissioners and a Summary of Responses document was prepared. The draft Equality Scheme has been forwarded, with a copy of the Response document, to the ECNI for approval to publish. We continue to operate the existing Scheme and monitor progress accordingly. We also received training in recent developments in equality law and policy in March 2011.

We are committed to fulfilling our statutory disability duties and have incorporated appropriate objectives and targets into our Disability Action Plan. The Disability Action Plan was reviewed in 2011 and also went out to public consultation on 12 December 2011. Commissioners are currently considering the comments received by the closure date of 16 March and intend to submit a revised plan for approval by the ECNI during the summer of 2012. Progress against our current Plan was included in the Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission.

As part of the review process in revising the Recruitment Code in 2010/11 Commissioners undertook a formal public consultation exercise in order to generate constructive debate and to secure, and take account of, as many diverse views as possible on their revised Code. Commissioners have now published a copy of the consultation response document with a copy of the revised Recruitment Code 2012. These are available on the Commissioners' website at www.nicscommissioners.org.

CSC NI ANNEXES

COMMISSIONERS IN POST DURING 2011/12



Chairperson: Brenda McLaughlin, CBE (re-appointed in May 2009)

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 a member of Senate and then as Pro-Chancellor for eight years, until December 2007. She is a member of the Public Service Commission and retired as a Director of Ulster Bank in June 2009.

Brenda was the first Chair of South and East Belfast HSS Trust 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 BBC (NI) 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.



Anthony Hopkins, CBE (appointed 2 February 2009 until 1 February 2012)

Dr Tony Hopkins 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 (re-appointed in June 2009)

Ruth was first appointed on 1 June 2006 and reappointed in June 2009 for a further period of 3 years. She has over 25 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, Head of Personnel, BBC (NI) and 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 NI Parole Commissioner; a Board member of the Health and Personal Social Services Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and a non-executive Director of the NI Transport Holding Company. Ruth is also a member of the Council of the University of Ulster (appointed from 1 October 2009).



Marion Matchett, CBE (appointed 8 March 2010)

Marion was appointed on 8 March 2010. Marion has spent all of her working life in the public sector and has been involved in education and training at a number of levels. As a former teacher, adviser, lecturer and inspector Marion's professional experience extends across the education and training sectors in Northern Ireland and beyond. Marion was Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate until her retirement in 2008 and was also a member of the Chief Inspector's Forum (UK) and the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates. Marion has a particular interest in the contribution of regulation and inspection to the promotion of improvement in services.



Raymond Mullan, OBE (appointed 1 October 2009)

Dr Raymond Mullan, appointed in October 2009, was Director & Chief Executive of Newry & Kilkeel Institute of Further & Higher Education from 1991 to 2007 and was Interim Director and Chief Executive of Belfast Metropolitan College during 2008 and 2009. He is also a lay Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission and is a non-executive Director of the Southern Health & Social Care Trust. Dr Mullan has also served on the Northern Ireland Economic Development Forum and is a member of Newry Chamber of Commerce and Trade.

He is an Economics graduate of Queens University, Belfast, holds a Masters Degree from the University of Ulster and is a Doctor of the University of Ulster. Dr Mullan received an OBE in 2000 for his services to education in Northern Ireland.



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. She was previously a member and Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board for HMP Maghaberry and Chair of the Association of Members of Independent Monitoring Boards for Northern Ireland. She is also the former Chair of the Women in Business Network and was a member of the Parades Commission 2006-2010. She is currently a Member of the Probation Board for NI, a member of the Prison Service Pay Review Body and a non-executive member of the Audit Committee of the Police Ombudsman for NI.

PEN PICTURE OF BRIAN ROWNTREE, CBE



BRIAN ROWNTREE, CBE

Brian Rowntree is formerly the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. He also holds appointments as an Independent Member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and is an advisory board member of NAMA (National Assets Management Agency). Prior to that he was Vice-President of Cecodhas – the European Social Housing Forum - and has held public appointments in the Criminal Justice, Health and Further Education sectors, as well as chairing corporate governance forums both in Northern Ireland and on a cross-border basis. Mr Rowntree is Secretary to the Chair's Forum Northern Ireland and a management board member of the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development. He is also Chair of the Sustainable Smart Home Working Group.

2011/12 RESOURCES AND BUDGET SPEND

11-12

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

Secretary: Heather Stevens (appointed on 7 September 2011)
Rosemary Crawford (until June 2011)
 Grade 5 (part-time)

Deputy Secretary: Joanne Dowling
 Grade A (part-time)

Bernie Gray (appointed on 30 August 2011)
Hugh Todd (until 30 June 2011)
 B1

Gareth Wright
 B2

Lynn Baird (appointed 30 January 2012 - part-time)
Jacqui Dawson (until 31 October 2011)
 Grade C

Mae Hamilton
 D1 (part-time)

2011/12 Budget Spend

Item	(£000s)
Commissioners' Fees*	£65K
Staff Salaries	£220K
Accommodation and overheads	£58K
Training (Commissioners and Staff)	£11K
Total	£354K

* Includes fees related to attendance at training events, travel and subsistence



**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

5TH FLOOR, WINDSOR HOUSE, BEDFORD STREET, BELFAST, BT2 7SR

t. 028 9054 9151 **f.** 028 9054 9414 **w.** www.nicscommissioners.org



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