REVIEW OF SCS 4-STAGE AUTHORISATION PROCESS

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1.1 The Civil Service Commissioners (Commissioners) would like to thank the staff of Corporate Human Resources (CHR), HR Connect, DOJ, OFMDFM, DARD and DFP for their co-operation, assistance and positive response during this review.

1.2 Commissioners would also like to thank the UK Civil Service Commission and the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA), in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) who shared their regulatory policies and practices with the Review Team.

1.3 The review was conducted in line with Commissioners' Audit Guidance and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), where appropriate. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) assisted in the quality assurance process of this review.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Article 6 of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 provides that any senior appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) made through open competition requires the written approval of Commissioners whose decision shall be final. This is referred to as the Senior Civil Service (SCS) 4-Stage Authorisation Process. The Office of the Civil Service Commissioners (OCSC/the Secretariat) manage this process on behalf of Commissioners.

2.2 During a SCS competition relevant information is provided from HR Connect to OCSC at four key stages of the process.

Stage A: authorisation to advertise the proposed appointment;

Stage B: authorisation to issue the invitations to interview, and first and second assessments, if appropriate;

Stage C: authorisation to notify the successful candidate(s); and

Stage D: approval to issue final offer(s) of appointment(s).

2.3 The process also requires a number of assurances from HR Connect in relation to the competition. The assurances provided during the SCS 4-Stage Authorisation Process confirm to Commissioners that recruitment practices are carried out in accordance with the Commissioners' Recruitment Code.

2.4 Commissioners undertake an annual internal audit of the Secretariat's work on the 4-Stage Authorisation process to check compliance with their procedures.

2.5 During 2013 Commissioners reviewed the 4-Stage Authorisation process and the assurances provided and a revised version was agreed and circulated to relevant stakeholders in April 2013. Changes to the assurances included how Ministerial involvement was reported to Commissioners; the need to seek confirmation of approval by the Permanent Secretaries Group if any

Recruitment Allowance is applicable; and confirmation that any invalid applications have been reported to the selection panel.

2.6 As well as the 4-Stage Authorisation process Commissioners routinely audit the recruitment policies and practices followed in making appointments to situations in the NICS to establish whether the Recruitment Code is being observed [Article 4(4) Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999].

2.7 The key focus of this review was to examine the assurances provided to the OCSC, and to seek evidence to support / validate the information provided during the SCS 4-Stage Authorisation process; to conduct the annual internal audit of the Secretariat's work; and to identify any potential improvements to the Authorisation process.

2.8 The Terms of Reference for this review are set out in **Annex A.**

3. **OBJECTIVES**

3.1 The Review of the 4-Stage Authorisation Process had the following objectives;

- To review the Secretariat's compliance with the Commissioners' Authorisation procedure, including revisiting the 2012/13 internal audit recommendations;

- To seek evidence of assurances provided to CSC from HR Connect, CHR, Departments or Agencies

- To identify potential improvements to the 4- Stage Authorisation Process.

4. NATURE AND SCOPE

4.1 During 2013 the NICS ran 19 SCS selection and recruitment exercises through open competition. The Review looked at three of these competitions - a 16% sample. This sample size is considered adequate to deliver reliable results on which to base recommendations.

4.2 The three SCS recruitment competitions examined were from different Departments relating to the period 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013. The following 2013 competitions were selected for assessment as part of the review:

- Director of Offender Policy and Operations (DOJ);

- Office of the Legislative Counsel (OFMDFM); and

- Director of Digital Services (DARD & DFP)

4.3 The Review Team comprised two members of staff from the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners supported by a Link Commissioner. Both members of the Review Team had received audit training provided by the CIPFA. The role of the Link Commissioner was to provide oversight of the process and guidance as required.

4.4 CIPFA have quality assured the evidence gathered in the course of this review and the processes followed to complete it.

The Internal Review

4.5 The review team conducted a review based on the records held by OCSC in relation to the three competitions selected, to assess compliance with the 4-Stage Authorisation process staff instructions. During this part of the review the team also looked for evidence of the implementation of recommendations from the 2012/13 internal review. During the review OCSC staff responsible for the 4-Stage Authorisation process were also invited to identify potential improvements in this aspect of Commissioners' work.

The Review of Assurances

4.6 The Review Team sought evidence to support the assurances made by HR Connect, CHR, Departments or Agencies in the course of the 4-Stage Authorisation Process. Each competition was assessed in line with the version of the Authorisation process that was in place at the time of the competition. The evidence presented was assessed to establish the strength of the assurance given. CHR, Enterprise Shared Services (ESS), HR Connect, Department or Agency staff involved in managing selection and recruitment were also consulted about potential improvements in the 4-Stage Authorisation process and how they comply with Commissioners' requirements.

4.7 The Review Team also undertook an examination of corresponding practices employed by the UK Commission and CPSA in the ROI in relation to the policy and practice employed to monitor recruitment to their respective Civil Service organisations.

4.8 The Review Team sought access to all records and such information as was considered necessary to carry out the Review. In order to gather the evidence required in support of the assurances provided the team engaged directly with CHR, ESS, resourcing partners HR Connect as well as the three lead Departments and the Chair of each selection panel.

4.9 Many of the assurances provided during the SCS 4-Stage Authorisation process have been evidenced through the competition documentation requested from HR Connect and the Departments. Much of the information in support of the assurances is recorded in the Candidate Information Booklet (CIB), the advertisement, the Competition Initiation Meeting (CIM) record, the Sift meeting record, the sift matrix, the Candidate Interview Assessment Booklets (CIAB), the panel forms, the mark frame and the letters of offer.

4.10 In addition to the competition documentation, information was requested in relation to any job analysis carried out prior to the competitions, the content of the Criteria Based Interview (CBI) training provided to the

selection panel and any competition procedures not covered in the NICS Recruitment Manual.

5. CRITERIA

5.1 The 4-Stage Authorisation process was developed to ensure compliance with the NICS SCS selection and recruitment process against Commissioners' Recruitment Code. Assurances within each stage of the process are drawn from the Code's core Recruitment Principles.

MERIT	Appointments are made on the basis of merit in fair and open competition
FIT FOR PURPOSE	All recruitment processes and practices adopted should be fit for purpose and commensurate with good practice
FAIR	Appointment processes should be fair and applied with consistency
OPEN AND TRANSPARENT	Appointments should be made in an open, accountable and transparent manner

5.2 The review was carried out in accordance with the Commissioners' Audit Guidance, Framework and Protocol, and in compliance with the Recruitment Code.

5.3 Evidence was gathered from those involved in the process including Corporate HR, ESS, HR Connect, the three Departments and the Chairs of the three selection panels. This evidence took the form of competition documentation, training materials, staff records, e-mails and interviews with the individuals involved in managing and delivering the competitions.

6. **OBERSERVATIONS & FINDINGS**

Annual Internal Audit of the OCSC management of the SCS 4-Stage Authorisation Process

6.1 In reviewing the process, the team re-visited the recommendations arising from the 2012/13 internal audit, which included the need to review the Authorisation process templates and guidance material to ensure consistent and correct use of the term 'authorisation' and 'approval', where appropriate. The Review found that all recommendations from the 2012/13 internal audit had been actioned.

6.2 Comprehensive documentation was made available by OCSC for all stages of the authorisation process and details of any issues that arose in relation to the three competitions reviewed were documented. There was evidence that the OCSC identified non-compliant issues in two of the three competitions. OCSC dealt with the issues correctly and efficiently and in one case an issue was appropriately raised with the Chairperson.

6.3 In each of the three competitions reviewed, once the complete information was provided by HR Connect, the OCSC met the turnaround target of two days. Most turnaround times were within one day of receiving the request.

6.4 The Review team found an inconsistency regarding the checks relating to training information provided by HR Connect. In 2012 the NICS requested a change to the Stage A Authorisation process to take account of a change to the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual regarding the assessment of panel members as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process. Following amendment to the NICS Recruitment Manual the SCS Stage A Authorisation request was revised to require HR Connect to provide the date that an individual has been 'assessed as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process'. This replaces providing the date the individual attended training.

6.5 In all three competitions the dates panel members attended training courses not the dates of assessment has been provided. The Secretariat did not return these requests to HR Connect to be completed properly.

6.6 Commissioners revised their SCS 4-Stage Authorisation Process in April 2013. Of the three competitions assessed two occurred after the introduction of the revised procedures. Both competition processes used the correct revised templates when requesting authorisation and approval from OCSC. In both competitions the assurances on the templates submitted to OCSC have not always been edited to reflect accurately the specific circumstances of the competition. For example the text of the Stage A assurance relating to Ministerial involvement should be deleted as appropriate. This had not been done on the Stage A template of either competition. The Secretariat did not return the request templates to HR Connect for correction as they were aware through an earlier communication that there was no Ministerial involvement in either competition.

Review of Assurances provided by the NICS and HR Connect

6.7 During the course of the Review the team sought evidence for 42 assurances. Evidence was found in support of nearly all of these assurances. This section of the report highlights five key areas of assurance which required more detailed consideration.

Job Analysis Assurance

6.8 *The panel has clearly identified the job description and person specification which have been informed and supported by job analysis [OCSC Stage A Assurance 4].*

6.9 Principle 2 of Commissioners' Recruitment Code; Appointment Processes Should Be Fit For Purpose, requires that all recruitment processes and practices adopted by the NICS should be fit for purpose, consistent with appointment on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition, and commensurate with good practice. This Principle extends to all aspects of recruitment including job analysis, defining job and person specifications, advertising the vacancy and the use of appropriate assessment processes.

6.10   The NICS policy manual requires that job analysis should be carried out, that the duties and responsibilities of the post are identified as well as the person specification. These should then be used to define suitable and effective eligibility and shortlisting criteria and that Departmental HR staff should undertake this task. Staff involved in Job Analysis undergo training provided by Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) which details the different methods which can be employed to carry out effective job analysis.

Findings

6.11   Evidence provided by Departmental HR staff for the three competitions in support of job analysis included reference to the Job Evaluation Senior Post (JESP) process. The main purpose of JESP however is to provide a fair and consistent approach for the assessment of SCS grading and pay band decisions, rather than for the development of job or person specifications for recruitment purposes. A blank JESP template is included at **Annex C**.

6.12   Following a review of the Prison Service organisational structure in 2012 it was decided to re-establish the post of **Director of Offender Policy and Operations**. There was concern at the time about attracting the right candidate under the recently revised SCS pay scales and so approval was sought to pay a Recruitment and Retention allowance. In support of this request a detailed job description and person specification was developed. NIPS was also required to carry out a JESP exercise. In this particular case the JESP exercise included consultation with appropriate stakeholders, current and future functions of the post and the weighting of the key elements of the post. These activities are identified in Commissioners Regulatory Framework as key performance indicators of effective job analysis.

6.13   The competition for the **Legislative Council** post was a re-run of a 2012 competition which failed to identify the required number of suitable candidates. For the 2012 competition OFMDFM HR in consultation with the Head of the Legislative Council drafted the job description and person specification. The post had changed little from the time the original JESP had

been conducted and this was also consulted in the development of the CIB. In 2013 the Head of the Legislative Council and Departmental HR updated the 2012 CIB including the job description and person specification. They met with the panel Chair to discuss and agree amendments. This included the expectations of the role, the current environment, challenges to delivery and suitability of the criteria.

6.14   DARD created the new **Director of Digital Services** post in order to manage their business and deliver services to customers in the most cost effective way in a rapidly changing digital environment. In DFP this was an existing post, Director of Information, Strategy and Innovation Division, which was re-named as **Director of Digital Services** to reflect the increased focus on citizen facing digital services. There were changes to the existing job description with certain areas of responsibility being removed and new ones added.

6.15   Both Departments worked together with the NICS Chief Information Officer and an IT specialist, to conduct detailed job analysis and identify the qualities and skills required to fill this role. A scoping meeting was held with the Chair of the panel, the DARD Permanent Secretary and Departmental HR. During the scoping meeting other more generic skills of a Senior Civil Service post were identified. Both Departments also produced a JESP for their specific post.

Evidence In Support of OCSC Assurance

6.16   Documentation and testimony from all three competitions demonstrate evidence in support of the assurance provided by HR Connect that job analyses were undertaken in line with the requirements of the Recruitment Code and the NICS manual. However the CIM record does not reflect the panel's consideration of job analysis in terms of job and person specification.

Attracting Candidates Assurance

6.17   *The panel has discussed the appropriateness of the approach adopted to attracting candidates, has considered diversity and outreach measures*

and, as appropriate, potential barriers to broad appeal across the community [OCSC Stage A Assurance 6].

6.18   Section 4.3 of Commissioners' Recruitment Code requires clear decisions on the appropriateness of the approach adopted in any recruitment competition to attracting candidates. This should include explicit and early consideration of diversity and outreach measures and action to identify and, as appropriate, remove potential barriers to broad appeal across the community.

Findings

6.19   In each of the three competitions reviewed HR Connect have assured the Secretariat that the panel has discussed the appropriateness of the approach adopted to attracting candidates, has considered diversity and outreach measures and, as appropriate, potential barriers to broad appeal across the community.

6.20   Outreach measures are those steps, over and beyond normal business, taken by Departments to effect greater communication and empathy with the public. A key objective of outreach measures is to create a welcome for all who might consider a career in the NICS.

6.21   All three CIM booklets demonstrate that each selection panel sought to attract the widest pool of candidates possible. They considered how and where each competition was to be advertised and Exceptional Advertising was used in all three competitions.

6.22   There is no direct reference to diversity, outreach or broad community appeal in the CIM notes. The NICS has an Employment and Diversity Plan in place to address these issues. The panel considered NICS policy that external competitions are advertised in the three major Northern Ireland newspapers whose readership reflects all Northern Ireland communities.

6.23   It is the responsibility of Equality and Diversity Branch in DFP to consider details of any post to be advertised, together with an equality review

of existing staff and determine if the Equality Statement to be inserted in the advertisement requires an affirmative action statement. All three cases were assessed by the Equality and Diversity Branch. Each advertisement carried the NICS equal opportunities statement. The **Director of Offender Policy** and **Director of Digital Services** advertisements also carried a positive action statement to welcome applications from women as they are known to be under represented at this grade across the NICS.

6.24   DARD consider that the **Director of Digital Services** advertisement addressed outreach measures by including a short narrative which sought to attract applicants to the position by drawing attention to the strategic level and problem solving nature of the role.

6.25   The option to fill all three posts by way of secondment was also communicated to potential applicants.

Evidence In Support of OCSC Assurance

6.26   All three competitions have evidence that the panel sought to attract the widest pool of candidates possible and that diversity and outreach measures have been considered by the appropriate branch in CHR. However there is no section in the CIM template to record discussion should the panel be required to consider any specific diversity issues, outreach measures and/or potential barriers to broad appeal across the community.

Training Panel Assurance

6.27   *Panel members have been assessed as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process [HR Connect Stage A Assurance Letter].*

6.28   Section 4.6 of Commissioners' Recruitment Code states that Commissioners regard appropriate training for all those involved in recruitment as fundamental to ensuring adherence to the four Principles of the Code.

6.29   Following amendment to the NICS Recruitment Manual in 2012 the CSC Stage A Authorisation request was revised to require HR Connect to

provide the date that an individual has been *'assessed as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process'.* This replaced providing the date the individual attended training. NICS Policy Manual indicates the assessment of an individual's training needs is carried out by the Department.

6.30 The Review Team were advised by CHR that Departments are expected to consider the training that the individual has undertaken to date and when this training was completed, any changes in legislation and/or policy and procedures since that date that would indicate a need to be retrained in any aspect of the process and also an individual's participation in recent selection exercises. A department should also consider any additional information it may possess in relation to an individual's performance in past training events/selection exercises. The Department should also take an individual's personal assessment of need into consideration – he/she may feel like they would benefit from being trained in a certain aspect of the selection process again.

Findings

6.31 Competition documentation indicates that at the initiation meeting, the training of panel members was discussed and there was evidence in the notes that any further training needs were considered.

6.32 As part of the vacancy initiation process Departments are required to provide HR Connect with a Panel Member Form (HR-VAC 1.92). The Department will complete a panel member form with details of panel members and the date's panel members attended training and send it to HR Connect. HR Connect are expected to accept this as confirmation that the Department consider the person is trained appropriately to carry out the duties of a panel member.

6.33 The Review found that Panel member forms were completed by all three Departments. Both NIPS and DARD have recorded panel members whose training had taken place more than two years before the date of the CIM. DARD has noted the recent panel experience of these particular

individuals. None of these three forms indicated that they were *'assessed as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process'.*

6.34   In all three Stage A requests the dates individuals attended training was provided but not the dates of the assessments.

Evidence In Support of OCSC Assurance

6.35   The CIM record and the completed Panel Forms are insufficient evidence that panel members were *'assessed as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process.'*

Appropriate training Assurance

6.36   *The panel has received appropriate training which included training on the Commissioners' revised Recruitment Code, the NICS selection and recruitment processes and procedures and equal opportunities responsibilities [OCSC Stage A Assurance 3].*

6.37   Section 4.6 of Commissioners' Recruitment Code states that recent and relevant training should be delivered to an appropriate and consistent standard reflecting current good practice with an awareness of new approaches. This includes training on the roles, responsibilities and functions of the key contributors at each stage of the recruitment process. Such training should be undertaken by each contributor and panel member participating in a recruitment competition and should be refreshed regularly.

Findings

6.38   On examination of the training material provided by the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) during this review it was found that the panel member training documentation refers to Commissioners' 2005 Recruitment Code rather than the revised 2012 Recruitment Code.

6.39   The NICS selection and recruitment processes and procedures and equal opportunities responsibilities have been addressed adequately.

Evidence In Support of OCSC Assurance

6.40   NICS are providing assurance that panel members have been trained appropriately. However based on the evidence reviewed this training is not up to date with regard to Commissioners' Recruitment Code.

Declaration of Interest Assurance

6.41   *The panel has recorded as appropriate declarations of interest including knowledge of candidates, either personal or professional [OCSC Stage C Assurance 2].*

6.42   Section 4.7 of Commissioners' Recruitment Code recognises that management arrangements for recruitment in general, and for specific competitions, will demonstrate how effectively the Code is being applied including measures to ensure the recording of panel members' declaration of interest, including knowledge of candidates, either personal or professional.

6.43   The NICS Policy and Procedures Manual indicate that knowledge of a candidate by a panel member will not automatically preclude the person from participating as a panel member. However, if the prospective panel member has a close personal relationship with potential candidate/s, he/she should consider if he/she can fulfil their panel role in an objective and impartial way and consideration should be given to identifying an alternative panel member. Any declaration of interest must be made known to and recorded by HR Connect.

6.44   At the sift stage applications are anonymised and the panel cannot be certain if they have a conflict of interest with the applicants. However NICS have asked HR Connect to record at this stage if there may be a potential conflict of interest and this is included on the sift matrix against the candidate number.

6.45   At the pre-interview stage in the process when the interview schedule including candidates' names is finalised and sent to the panel members, they are advised to contact HR Connect if there is a conflict of interest.

Findings

6.46   At the sift stage in one of the competitions under review panel members declared potential conflict of interest in relation to certain candidates. At interview when candidates were identifiable there is no evidence that this was considered further.

6.47   There are no declarations of interest including knowledge of candidates, either personal or professional recorded for any of the three competitions under review.

Evidence In Support of OCSC Assurance

6.48   The Review found evidence that conflict of interest is considered at sift stage however there is no evidence to support the assurance that appropriate declarations of interest including knowledge of candidates, either personal or professional is recorded at interview stage.

Third Party Monitoring by CHR

6.49   The 4- Stage Authorisation Process encompasses many elements of NICS recruitment and selection that are managed by HR Connect on their behalf. The Review Team therefore examined and sought evidence of how CHR obtains third party assurance that information provided to Commissioners accurately reflects practices on the ground.

Findings

6.50   The resourcing processes operated by HR Connect were designed with direct NICS involvement and reflect CHR processes prior to the introduction of HR Connect. These processes have been designed to comply with both relevant employment law and Civil Service Commissioners' requirements.

6.51   HR Connect operations in all service areas are subject to close and regular scrutiny, monitoring and internal audit by NICS. In the field of resourcing, this includes ad hoc meetings between Enterprise Shared Services (ESS), Appointments and Marketing Branch (AMB) and HR Connect, which examine both service performance and any other issues arising from "live service", including complaints. The NICS consider that this level of oversight means they are well placed to detect potential Recruitment Code compliance issues.

6.52   Departmental Establishment Officers sign a declaration of compliance on a yearly basis. In addition written confirmation is sought from both Capita and the Departmental Competition Lead in respect of each individual external competition that the application of recruitment policies and procedures are subject to regular internal monitoring and are in accordance with the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code and NICS policy and procedures

Improvements to the 4 – Stage Authorisation Process

6.53   OCSC staff involved in the 4-Stage Authorisation Process and CHR were invited to suggest any improvements to the process and/or the related documentation.

OCSC Response

6.54   During the course of the review it was noted that OCSC staff carry out a number of checks on the documentation they receive in relation to the Authorisation process. Not all of these checks are recorded on the current staff instructions however they do form an important aspect of the overall authorisation and approval process. For example the numerical verification of scoring matrix used to calculate each candidate overall score provided at Stage C.

6.55   The staff guidance material should be revised to include these additional checks.

CHR Response

6.56   When asked to suggest improvements to the 4-Stage process CHR report that, while they accept the process provides a checklist for the OCSC to assure Commissioners that procedure is followed, the approvals are so detailed they consider there is little room for flexibility in a competition which may differ from the normal process. They consider this was the case with the recent generic Grade 3 and Grade 5 competitions. During these competitions additional Stage B requests were revised and included to take account of the additional assessment steps in the competitions.

6.57   CHR suggest that the 4-stage process could be streamlined to provide a simpler process which could be considered to be a better fit to the different selection approaches used from time to time.

7. UK and Republic of Ireland Regulation

Regulating Recruitment to the UK Civil Service

The UK Civil Service Commission regulates recruitment to the Home Civil Service (HCS) in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland providing assurance that civil servants are appointed on merit after fair and open competition. It is established by statute and independent of Government and the Civil Service. The Commission currently consists of 11 Civil Service Commissioners and their staff.

The Commission's Recruitment Principles are the key source document to which departments and agencies must refer for the Commission's interpretation of the statutory requirement of appointment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Principles also outline the circumstances in which appointments may be made as exceptions to the legal requirement. The Recruitment Principles are focused and accessible. They make it clear that in developing and applying recruitment processes that best meet their business needs, departments and agencies must operate in accordance with the Recruitment Principles and must test their own practices against them.

Civil Service Commissioners chair selection panels for all external recruitment competitions at Senior Civil Service pay band 2 (Directors), pay band 3 (Director General) and Permanent Secretary levels.

The Commission may also decide that a Commissioner must chair any other open (external) competition, taking into account, among other factors, the results of any compliance monitoring audit and the assessed risk rating for a particular Department or area of work.

The chair of the panel has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the selection process is compliant with the Recruitment Principles and may play a full part in the work of the panel. At the end of the process the chair must produce a record which should briefly describe the outcome, the assessment stages and on what evidence the assessment of merit was made, the order of merit and confirm that the selection process was conducted in accordance with the Recruitment Principles.

Below SCS Pay Band 2, individual departments are responsible for ensuring that their selection processes meet the legal requirement of selection on merit, following a fair and open process, in line with the Recruitment Principles. The Commission monitors this through its annual compliance monitoring audit. Since 1995, the data collection and much of the analysis work has been contracted out, most recently (since 2013) to KPMG.

Departments and agencies complete an annual compliance return which includes external recruitment data including any that has been excepted from fair and open competition, diversity of applicant fields and details of any changes that have taken place within the HR team during the year in question.
This is underpinned by a compliance statement signed by the department's Permanent Secretary or equivalent.

The data is reviewed on a risk basis. Evidence is assessed and a red, amber/red, amber/green, green marking is awarded to indicate the level of risk. Over 20 on site visits to departments and agencies are conducted by the auditors each year. The Commission wants to ensure that all departments and agencies are visited over a 3-4 year period. Organisations that have been initially assessed as red or amber/red are always visited.

Regulating Recruitment to the Civil Service in the Republic of Ireland

The Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) is an independent body established under the terms of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004. They are the principal regulator of recruitment and selection processes to the ROI Civil Service, An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive, the Health Information and Quality Authority, any other public body to which the application of the Act has been extended by order of the Minister for Finance, and to those positions in the local authorities and vocational education committees to which the Local Authorities (Officers and Employees) Act, 1926 applies. The Commission consists of five ex-officio members (Commissioners).

The Commission has a statutory role to ensure that appointments in the organisations subject to its remit are made on merit and as the result of fair and transparent appointment processes. They do this through the issue of recruitment licences which they can revoke where necessary. Appointment processes for recruitment to all positions within the remit of the Act are subject to Codes of Practice published by the Commission. The Codes set out the regulatory framework for such appointment processes and centre on five recruitment principles;

1. Probity
2. Appointments made on merit
3. An appointment process in line with best practice
4. A fair appointment process applied with consistency
5. Appointments made in an open, accountable and transparent manner

The Commission audit and evaluate recruitment policies and practices to safeguard these standards and to establish whether or not its Codes of Practice are being observed.

Office holders who are granted recruitment licences may delegate all or part of the task of recruitment to the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Where such a delegation is made, the Chief Executive of the PAS, rather than the office holder concerned, is responsible, to the extent of the delegation, for adherence to the terms and conditions of the recruitment licence, the Codes of Practice and any other guidelines issued by the Commission.

In ROI, all senior vacancies are approved by the Department and Minister of Finance. Appointments to Secretary General (Permanent Secretary) positions are made by Government. The Minister approves appointments for positions at Assistant Secretary (SCS Grade 3) level.

The approval of the Minister for Finance is required for each competition. The Minister for Finance is responsible for all aspects of recruitment to the Civil Service including the terms and conditions, eligibility criteria and any Irish Language requirement. This is recognised in the CPSA Code of Practice.

The Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointment) Act 2004 provides that these positions can be filled without recourse to the CPSA and its Codes of

Practice. However the vast majority of Secretary General and Assistant Secretary positions are filled following open competition subject to the CPSA's Code of Practice. Decisions to open or confine Secretary General and Assistant Secretary positions are taken at Government level.

Once the Government has decided to open or confine the competition, the Appointment processes for Secretary General and Assistant Secretary positions are managed by the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC)
In undertaking a competition:

– TLAC will carry out a shortlisting exercise and send forward 12 – 15 candidates for preliminary interview by the Public Appointments Service (PAS)

– PAS will hold the interviews and the top three to five candidates will progress to a final TLAC interview;

– In the case of a confined process for an Assistant Secretary, the Secretary General can nominate two existing civil servants for a TLAC interview, i.e. they do not need to apply for the competition or undergo the preliminary interview;

– in the case of a Secretary General appointment, on completion of the TLAC interview, the Committee recommends three candidates, in alphabetical order to the Minister for decision on appointment; and

– for all appointments below Secretary General, one name is recommended to the Minister for endorsement.

8. Recommendations from the SCS 4 Stage Authorisation Process Review

Commissioners are committed to ensuring that the Recruitment Code Principles are being applied in the selection and recruitment processes throughout the NICS. In light of the evidence gathered during this SCS 4 Stage Authorisation Process Review, the following recommendations are made:

Civil Service Commissioners/OCSC

Recommendation 1: OCSC should no longer accept the date of training as adequate assurance that panel members were *'assessed as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process'* as part of the Stage A authorisation process [6.5].

Recommendation 2: OCSC should ensure that any authorisation request templates not correctly edited are returned to HR Connect [6.6]

Recommendation 3: OCSC should review the staff guidance material for the 4-Stage Authorisation process to ensure that it includes all the checks carried out on competition documentation received from HR Connect and ensure that all staff are updated on any changes [6.55].

Recommendation 4: Commissioners should consider the NICS suggestion that the Authorisation process could be streamlined [6.57].

NICS

Recommendation 5: NICS should remind HR Connect staff to ensure that all Authorisation templates are edited correctly before submission to OCSC. [6.6]

Recommendation 6: The Competition Initiation Meeting documentation should be reviewed to include a record of the selection panel's consideration of the job analysis, carried out by the Department, and that this has been used to inform the job and person specification [6.16].

Recommendation 7: The Competition Initiation Meeting record should be reviewed to record the selection panel's consideration of any specific diversity issues in relation to a particular competition [6.26].

Recommendation 8: NICS should review the current practice of providing dates of panel member training to the OCSC and ensure adherence to NICS policy in relation to panel members being *'assessed as appropriately trained for the recruitment and selection process'* to enable the appropriate assurance is provided to OCSC [6.35].

Recommendation 9: NICS should ensure that Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) training courses and supporting documentation reflect Commissioners' 2012 Revised Recruitment Code [6.40].

Recommendation 10: NICS should review the current process for recording declarations of interest to ensure that panel members are invited to record declarations of interest, including knowledge of candidates, either personal or professional [6.48].

4-STAGE AUTORISATION PROCESS REVIEW
TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

1.   The Civil Service Commissioners have a statutory role to regulate appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) by open competition. Article 6 of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 provides that any appointment to the Senior Civil Service (SCS) made through open competition requires the written approval of the Commissioners whose decision shall be final. This includes appointments to the SCS as detailed in the 2012 Recruitment Code where Ministers may wish to have some involvement in the recruitment process. This is referred to as the 4-Stage Authorisation Process. The Office of the Civil Service Commissioners (OCSC) manages the process on behalf of Commissioners.

Purpose

2.   Relevant information provided by HR Connect or Departments /Agencies to OCSC is checked at each of the four key stages of the authorisation process. The process also requires a number of assurances from HR Connect in relation to the competition. The purpose of this review is to seek evidence of these assurances and to identify potential improvements to the Authorisation process. The review will look at three SCS competitions run in different NICS Departments during 2013. The review is taken forward in line with the requirements set out in Commissioners' Recruitment Code (2012).

3.   Each year OCSC conducts an internal audit of staff compliance with the 4-Stage Authorisation process desk instructions. The 2014/15 annual audit will be incorporated in to this review.

Objectives

4.   The objectives of the 4-Stage Authorisation review are to:

  −   review the Secretariat's compliance with the Commissioners' Authorisation procedure, including revisiting the 2012/13 internal audit recommendations;

  −   seek evidence of assurances provided to CSC from HR Connect and CHR;

  −   identify potential improvements to the 4- Stage Authorisation Process.

Scope

5.   This review will focus on three SCS competitions from different Departments relating to the period 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013. It will seek evidence and assess compliance with the requirement set out in the four key stages of the authorisation process. These are at:

Stage A: authorisation to advertise the proposed appointment;

Stage B: authorisation to issue the invitations to interview, and first
and second assessments, if appropriate;

Stage C: authorisation to notify the successful candidate(s); and

Stage D: approval to issue final offer(s) of appointment(s).

Audit Requirements

6.   The review team will require access to all records and such information as considered necessary to fulfil the review responsibilities. HR Connect have responsibility for managing the 4- stage process on behalf of the NICS and it is envisaged that the majority of information required will be held by them.

Conduct of the 4-Stage Authorisation Process Review

7.   The review will be carried out in accordance with the Commissioners' Audit Guidance, Framework and Protocol, and in compliance with the Recruitment Code.

Methodology

8.   The review team will comprise of two members of the Secretariat to the Civil Service Commissioners who will be supported by a Link Commissioner.

9.   The evidence gathering phase of this review will follow the steps below:

a) a review of the records held by OCSC in relation to the 3 competitions selected, this will be assess compliance with the 4-Stage Authorisation desk instructions process.

b) a review of the implementation of recommendations from the 2012/13 internal review to seek evidence of compliance and improvement.

c) OCSC staff responsible for the 4-Stage Authorisation process will be consulted with a view to identifying potential improvements in this aspect of Commissioners' work.

d) evidence to support the assurances made by HR Connect, CHR, Departments or Agencies will be sought from the appropriate source. The evidence will be assessed to establish the strength of the assurance given.

e) HR Connect, CHR, Department or Agency staff responsible for providing information and assurances under the 4-Stage Authorisation process will be consulted with a view to identifying potential improvements in how they comply with Commissioners' requirements.

f) an examination of corresponding practices employed by Commissioners in GB and in the ROI.

10.   Following a factual accuracy check of appropriate sections with the NICS, a summary draft report will be provided to Commissioners for consideration.

11.   Following Commissioners approval the final report will be issued to the Departments, CHR and published on Commissioners' website.

Timetable

12.   The Review Team envisage the internal review work (see paragraph 9) will take place early April 2014. Late April CHR/HR Connect will be contacted in relation to the remaining information requirements to complete the review. The target date for the completion of the review is end of June 2014.

Data Protection

13.   The OCSC will collect, store and use the information provided to us in the course of this review in a manner that is compatible with the Data Protection Act 1998. When required to do so the OCSC will conform to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Regulations and associated Codes of Practice.

Job Analysis Form

Job Evaluation Senior Post Template - JESP

1.   Basic Details

Job title	
Grade/pay band	
Team/ Business Unit/Location	
Completed by	
Date	
Telephone no.	
Manager's name	
Date agreed with manager	

2.   Overall Job Purpose

Please provide a summary of the role, main objectives, key responsibilities and deliverables.

3.   Organisation

Please provide an organisation chart showing the post, those reporting to it, the post it reports to and the others who report to the same manager.

4.   Main Activities

Please list the main activities and estimate the percentage of time spent on each.

Activity	% time

5.   Context and Current Issues

Briefly, set the scene for the work including how it fits into wider developments and some of the issues the post-holder handles (and their role in dealing with those issues).

[ ]

6.   Managing People

Please give details of the number and job types of people directly managed, their location, deployment and the post-holder's contribution to management responsibilities.

[ ]

7.   Accountability

Please give examples of the extent to which the post-holder is held accountable for the use of resources, decisions, providing advice, performance and results.

[ ]

8.   Judgement

Please give examples of the types of situation where judgement is applied, the level of creativity needed and the impact on decisions the post-holder is involved in.

[ ]

9.   Influencing

Please give examples of the requirements to get results through others outside the line management chain. This may include negotiation, persuasion, representation and/or co-ordination within the Civil Service and beyond.

[ ]

10.   Professional Competence

Please detail the key abilities required to undertake the job effectively, including any mandatory qualifications, and the extent to which the post-holder has to provide input (rather than managing others who are the "experts").

[ ]

11.   Further Information

Any particular comments which you consider would be helpful including, in particular:

- the effect of expected changes in the area of business over the next two years

- the coherence of the present responsibilities

- the impact of expected changes in the management of finance and manpower.