

## **Candidate Information Booklet**

**IRC302269**

### **Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI)**

**Completed Application Forms  
must be returned to HRConnect no  
later than 12:00 noon (UK time)  
on  
**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2024****

You are advised to download and keep a copy of this booklet for future reference - it will no longer be available online after the above date.

This information booklet is designed to help you provide the relevant information when completing the application form. It can be requested in alternative formats by contacting **HRConnect** on **0800 1 300 330** or via email to [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

This information booklet has been produced as a guide to help you provide the relevant information when completing the application form for the post of Commissioner for Older People. These documents are only a memorandum and should not be taken as constituting conditions of appointment.

The qualities required and details of how to complete the application form are set out within this pack. It is recommended that you read this information carefully before completing the application form.

The competition to appoint a Commissioner for Older People is being administered by HRConnect on behalf of The Executive Office. HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible should you provide your e-mail address as part of your application; you should therefore check your email account (including the Junk folder) to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

## **Privacy Notice**

The Executive Office is committed to protecting your privacy. We will process the personal data you provide us for the purpose of recruiting a Commissioner for Older People in line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (CPANI) Code of Practice. For more information please see our Privacy Notice at [Public Appointments Privacy Notice | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

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## FOREWORD

Thank you for your interest in the post of Commissioner for Older People (COPNI).

The role of Commissioner is vital in safeguarding and promoting the interests of older people.

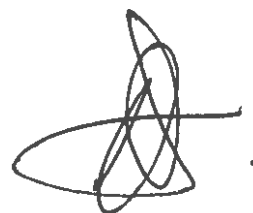
We are looking for an individual with vision who is passionate about championing the interests of older people here at the highest level and bringing about real improvements in their lives.

Empathic, approachable and a skilled communicator with people from a wide variety of backgrounds, the Commissioner will be fulfilling a unique role. There are no specific qualifications required to apply for this position and you could come from any of a wide variety of backgrounds. However, we are looking for an individual who can bring their skills and experience to fulfil this role to deliver maximum impact.

If you have the understanding and tenacity to make a real difference to the lives of older people and a commitment to promote their interests to decision makers in the public, private and voluntary sectors, we would be delighted to receive your application.



**Michelle O'Neill MLA**  
**First Minister**



**Emma Little-Pengelly MLA**  
**deputy First Minister**

## **Section 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **The Commissioner for Older People**

The Commissioner for Older People was established by legislation in 2011 under the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The principal aim of the Commissioner is to safeguard and promote the interests of older persons. The following interpretation of “older person” is included in Section 25 of the legislation: ‘This includes those aged 60 or over and those over the age of 50 if the Commissioner is of the opinion that a matter raises a question of principle affecting them’.

COPNI was established as an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) on 25 January 2011 and is sponsored by the Department for Communities. The Commissioner is appointed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly.

The government and relevant authorities pass legislation, develop policy and strategies, and provide services for older people across all Executive Departments. The Commissioner’s job is to make sure they do this in a way that is older people rights compliant.

COPNI contributes to the work of the Executive, to advance the potential for better life outcomes for older people in here. It has a stated aim to secure the inclusion of a specific outcome focusing on older people within any new Programme for Government and to work with government to deliver this.

You can find out more about COPNI on their Commissioner’s website <https://www.copni.org>

### **The Executive Office**

The First Minister and the deputy First Minister hold joint office within The Executive Office (TEO). The purpose of TEO is to support the Executive, and in particular to secure wellbeing for all through improved relations, outcomes and governance.

The Commissioner for Older People is independent of government and is appointed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly.

## **Department for Communities**

The Department for Communities provides the formal sponsorship role for the Commissioner's office. The Department is responsible for ensuring the discharge of COPNI's responsibilities in respect of the governing legislation and is the primary point of contact for the Commissioner in terms of day-to-day operational delivery, as well as its strategic functions.

## **Section 2 – ROLE DESCRIPTION**

The Commissioner's role has a range of functions assigned to it under the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The principal aim of the Commissioner is to safeguard and promote the interests of older people. In deciding whether or how to act in relation to any particular older person, the best interests of that older person are to be the Commissioner's main consideration. In the Commissioner's dealings with any body or person under this Act, the Commissioner must at all times have regard to any statutory provision or rule of law which authorises or requires that body or person to act in a particular manner or authorises or requires that body or person to have regard to any consideration other than that mentioned above. The Commissioner must have regard to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons in the exercise of their functions.

Importantly the postholder will be the Accounting Officer for the office and will be accountable to the Assembly, through the Department for Communities, for good governance and control and for COPNI's use of financial resources in carrying out its functions.

### **Functions of the Commissioner for Older People**

#### Duties

1. To promote an awareness of matters relating to the interests of older persons and of the need to safeguard those interests.
2. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the interests of older persons.
3. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for older persons by relevant authorities.
4. To promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older persons.
5. To encourage best practice in the treatment of older persons.
6. To promote positive attitudes towards older persons and encourage participation by older persons in public life.

7. To advise the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and a relevant authority on matters concerning the interests of older people.
8. To take reasonable steps to encourage older people to communicate with the Commissioner and their staff and to seek the views of older people.
9. To lead and provide strategic direction to a team of staff
10. To develop and deliver on outcomes-focused strategic and annual business plans, engaging with older people and COPNI staff and other relevant stakeholders.
11. To provide the highest levels of assurance in relation to good governance and controls in relation to the use of a significant annual budget allocation in the region of £1.6m.
12. To ensure the Commissioner's services are available, as far as practicable, at a place convenient for older people.

### General Powers

13. To undertake, commission or provide financial or other assistance for research or educational activities concerning the interests of older persons or the exercise of the Commissioner's functions.
14. After consultation with such bodies or persons as the Commissioner thinks appropriate, to issue guidance on best practice in relation to any matter concerning the interests of older persons.
15. For the purposes of any of the Commissioner's functions, conduct such investigations as the Commissioner considers necessary or expedient.
16. To compile, provide and publish information on matters concerning the interests of older persons.
17. To make representations or recommendations to any body or person, whether public or private, on matters concerning interests of older persons.

### **Specific Powers**

The Commissioner has specific powers to:

- conduct general reviews of advocacy, complaint, inspection and whistle-blowing arrangements of relevant authorities;
- conduct reviews of advocacy, complaint, inspection and whistle-blowing arrangements of relevant authorities in individual cases;



- assist older people with complaints to relevant authorities;
- investigate complaints against relevant authorities;
- bring, intervene in or assist in legal proceedings;
- provide assistance in relation to legal proceedings; and
- commission services in relation to conciliation of disputes.

**In relation to the specific powers of the Commissioner**, there is provision for three different types of investigation which can be carried out by the Commissioner's staff or others working on behalf of the Commissioner as follows.

- **Informal general investigations:** These can be used in relation to any organisation.
- **Review powers:** Review of the adequacy and the effectiveness of the law and practice relating to the interests of older people and review of the adequacy and effectiveness of the services provided to older people by relevant authorities; this intermediate type of investigation has set procedures, but few associated formal powers.
- **Formal investigations:** These relate specifically to a range of organisations listed or referenced in the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 as relevant authorities. Formal investigations cover the investigation of complaints, or the review of arrangements for complaints, inspections, whistle-blowing or advocacy, either in relation to individual cases or general reviews. There are set procedures; formal powers of entry and evidence gathering; sanctions to deal with obstruction including powers equivalent to those of the High Court; and safeguards on the disclosure of information.

### **Time Commitment and Remuneration**

In accordance with the 2011 Act, the Commissioner is appointed for a 4-year term. A person may be eligible for reappointment for a second term of office, subject to satisfactory performance. It is intended that the successful appointee will take up the post following completion of all pre appointment checks.

The normal working week is 37 hours. However, as with posts generally at this level, the Commissioner will need flexibility to work such hours and at such times as may be necessary to discharge their duties effectively. This may require regularly working outside normal office working hours in evenings and weekends, in order to attend meetings and be accessible to older people.

The remuneration for the Commissioner will be in line with the Northern Ireland Civil Service Senior Civil Service (SCS) (Pay Band 1 equivalent and within the range of £79,237 to £88,908 per annum). Remuneration on appointment will normally be the minimum of the range. Eligibility for annual pay uplifts will be dependent on satisfactory performance, in line with that same NICS SCS pay scale.

Following appointment, travel and subsistence expenses are payable at Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) rates. All remuneration and expenses are subject to deduction of income tax and national insurance.

### **Location**

The post is currently based at Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP. However, COPNI operates a Hybrid Working Policy which allows staff to work between the office and remote working locations/home based on business needs. Whilst some meetings can be attended virtually there is an expectation that the post holder will regularly attend a number of meetings/engagements in person.

### **Travel**

The Commissioner will be required to travel extensively within the jurisdiction, and on occasion, more widely within the UK, Ireland, Europe and further afield. Following appointment, you will be entitled to claim normal travel and subsistence expenses in line with NICS terms, conditions and rates, for travel on official business. For the avoidance of doubt, and in line with normal employment conditions, commuting travel to and from the office is not paid.

### **Leave**

In addition to public and privilege holidays, the Commissioner will have a leave allowance of 30 days per annum.

## **Pension**

The appointment is pensionable; pension arrangements will be agreed with the Department for Communities.

## **Training**

The successful applicant will be required to attend appropriate induction training as necessary. The Commissioner will be supported with additional development needs or training as necessary.

## **Code of Conduct**

To ensure that public service values remain at the heart of the role, the Commissioner will be required, on appointment, to demonstrate high standards of corporate and personal conduct and to subscribe to the Nolan Principles as well as the organisation's relevant policies and procedures.

## **Performance Assessments**

There will be annual assessments of the performance of the Commissioner for Older People by the Department for Communities' Senior Sponsor throughout the period of appointment.

### Section 3 - PERSON SPECIFICATION

There are six essential criteria for the position of COPNI. These describe what is needed to be effective in the role. A shortlisting process will be applied if required.

You are expected to demonstrate your ability, by way of examples, to meet all the following essential criteria. Examples can be provided from your professional experience, voluntary and/or community sector experience or from within your personal life. Please note that further details are attached in Annex A.

#### **Essential Criteria**

1. A clear understanding of the needs of older people here and the ability to engage effectively with them to best represent their interests and priorities.
2. Knowledge and understanding of key policies, legislation and services most directly impacting older people here; together with a demonstrable commitment to promoting and advancing their rights and best interests.
3. Expert advocacy and negotiating skills, including the ability to command confidence and influence the decision making of government, statutory agencies and local government.
4. Highly effective networking and communication skills and experience, including working with the media, in order to influence decision making.
5. Experience of having made a positive impact in a leadership role<sup>1</sup>, which involved developing and communicating a vision for the future, through strategic thinking, people management and engagement; translating this into delivery of clear plans with measurable outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> 'leadership role' is defined as: (i) someone who is/was involved in the provision of detailed advice that directly influenced strategic issues or who is/was personally involved in taking decisions on strategic/high level issues concerning the corporate body or organisation within which an individual is/was working; or (ii) membership of, or reporting at board level; or (iii) Senior Civil Servant or equivalent grade in the wider public sector.

6. Experience of delivering outcomes through the proactive management of significant financial resources and the application of best practice in relation to good governance, accountability and financial controls.

### **Shortlisting Criteria**

In addition, applicants should be aware that, after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the Selection Panel reserves the right to apply a scoring system to further shortlist candidates for interview.

Applicants will be ranked based on the total of their score awarded for the essential criteria. Only those candidates who have a total mark equal to or higher than the agreed cut-off will proceed to the interview stage. Should the number of candidates achieving the agreed cut-off mark be deemed by the Interview Panel to be insufficient, the Interview Panel may agree to lower the cut-off by increments until an adequate pool of candidates for interview is obtained.

**The Selection Panel will complete this assessment against the information provided by applicants in response to the eligibility criteria.**

## **Section 4 - SELECTION PROCESS**

The selection process will include a sift against the essential criteria which is followed by shortlisting, if necessary. For those successful at that stage there will then be an assessment stage consisting of a presentation and competence-based interview.

Applicants will be kept informed of their progress throughout the competition.

A discussion with the First Minister and deputy First Minister prior to the appointment decision may also be required. The process is set out in more detail below.

### **Process Overview**

#### **Stage 1 – Formal Screening of Applications**

All applications received by the closing date will be screened to check that they have been fully completed. Only those whose applications are completed fully will proceed to the next stage. Application forms will not be screened until after the closing date, so the onus is on applicants to ensure that they submit all the required information.

#### **Stage 2 - Sift of Application Forms**

Following stage 1 above, the selection panel will review anonymised application forms against the selection criteria.

The Selection Panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each essential criterion on the basis of the evidence the applicant provides on the application form.

Where it is necessary to prepare a shortlist for interview, the shortlisting criteria will be applied as set out in Section 3.

Only those applicants assessed as meeting all essential criteria and shortlisting criteria (if applicable) and cross departmental check will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

### **Stage 3 – Presentation and Interview**

It is anticipated that Stage 3 will take place in Belfast from week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Candidates should make themselves available during this time. Given the statutory role of the Commissioner, older people representatives are actively involved in this process. This assessment stage will consist of the following elements and will involve assessment of the essential criteria.

#### **i. Presentation**

Candidates will be required to make a presentation on a notified topic relevant to the responsibilities of the post, lasting no longer than 7 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the panel. The presentation will be used to assess essential criterion 1.

Further information including the presentation topic will be provided to candidates in the invitation to interview letter. Applicants should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview as no preparation time will be provided on the day of interview. Applicants may bring prepared flip chart paper and/or speaking notes if desired to deliver the presentation. No other visual aids or handouts are permitted.

#### **ii. Interview**

Following the presentation, candidates will be interviewed by the selection panel. The panel will focus on testing the candidate's experience, skills and knowledge of the other five essential criteria.

Interview guidance can be found at Annex B.

Candidates will also be asked to confirm their commitment to the Principles of Public Life (Annex C). Any real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest (Annex C and Pg 29) which may impair their ability to carry out the role of the COPNI with integrity and objectivity will be explored. Also, at this stage applications will be reviewed/explored in relation to disqualification criteria.

### Assessment Scoring

Each candidate will be required to reach a minimum pass mark from the selection panel otherwise their name will not be put forward to the First Minister and deputy First Minister for consideration.

### **Stage 4 - First Minister and deputy First Minister Selection**

Following interviews, the list of applicants who met the pass mark (including a candidate summary for each) will be forwarded to the First Minister and deputy First Minister in an unranked order to select the successful candidate. The First Minister and deputy First Minister may choose to meet the applicants suitable for appointment (this may involve a presentation), prior to making the appointment decision.

### **Stage 5 - Appointment**

Following successful pre-appointment checks and acceptance of the post by the successful applicant, the appointment will be announced by way of a Press Release. If you are appointed, some information on your completed application form will be made public in a press release. This will include your name, a brief summary of your career/experience; length and remuneration of the appointment; details of any other Ministerial appointments held along with any related remuneration received. The successful candidate will be asked to complete a Political Activity Questionnaire Form and the information provided will be published with the announcement of the appointment.

### Reserve List

A reserve list to cover any unforeseen vacancy that may arise within 12 months of the date of the decision to appoint may be retained.

### **Pre-appointments Checks**

#### **Tenure of Office**

The COPNI legislation in terms of tenure of office specifies that an individual is not eligible for appointment or reappointment as the Commissioner at any time after the end of the second term of Office. This check will be conducted prior to sift.



## **Appointments Held**

Prior to interview, a cross-departmental check will be carried out on the probity and performance of those candidates who currently hold or have held public appointment roles here. As such you should be aware that it will be necessary to share information between departments. Any potential issues identified can be raised at interview and candidates have the right of reply. The recorded performance and attendance in other public appointment roles will not form part of the candidate assessment by the panel but may be taken into account in selecting candidates for appointment.

## **Probity and Conflicts of Interest**

The Department must ensure that the individuals they appoint are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are: **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership**. Further information is available at <http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/>.

Departments must take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. Therefore, applicants, in their application form, must disclose information or personal connections which, if they were to be appointed, could lead to a conflict of interest, or be perceived as such.

At interview, the Selection Panel will determine whether you are aware of the standards of behaviour required of public appointees and can demonstrate your understanding of the issue. You will also be asked to declare whether or not you are involved, or have been involved, in activities that could call into question your reputation and/or damage the reputation of the body to which you are applying. The Selection Panel will consider fully your answers and, if necessary, question further or challenge.

Conflicts of interest may not be a barrier to appointment but both real and perceived conflicts must be discussed with all candidates by the Selection Panel. Please refer to **Annex C and Annex D** for further information on this subject.

The following checks will be carried out prior to appointment:

## **Company directors' disqualification and bankruptcy and insolvency checks**

A company directors' disqualification check and a bankruptcy and insolvency check will be conducted. In accordance with the COPNI legislation a person may be removed from Office if they have become bankrupt; are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order; had a debt relief order made against him/her; or are the subject of a debt relief restrictions order or made an arrangement or composition with his creditors.

### **Legal entitlement to work in the UK**

The Department needs to ensure that anyone it appoints is not subject to immigration control. Candidates being considered for appointment would need to provide documentation to this effect e.g., passport, share code or other to confirm legal right to work in the UK.

### **Civil Servants – Rules on the acceptance of outside business appointments**

Serving or former civil servants are not debarred from applying for public appointments. However, serving civil servants will require their Department's approval and former civil servants may require the approval of their last Department (depending on their grade and whether they left within the last two years) before taking up an appointment. Applicants should refer to the NICS HR policy 6.01 Standards of Conduct.

### **Disqualification – Other**

Under the terms of the NI Assembly Disqualification Act 1975, existing MLAs cease to hold their elected office if they take up an appointment as Commissioner for Older People.

If an individual holding a public appointment decides to stand for election as an MLA, they must immediately notify the Department of their intentions. If they have not resigned their public appointment before submitting their nomination as a candidate, and are subsequently elected as an MLA, their election will be void.

### **Access NI Basic Check**

This check will be activated for the successful applicant only.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check to be carried out by AccessNI through Experian. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is a criminal offence for anyone who is included on a barred list to work or seek work, in regulated activity. Individuals who are barred may be able to work in controlled activity.

It is intended that the successful appointee to the Commissioner for Older People will be subject to an Access NI Basic check as a condition of appointment.

In accordance with the COPNI legislation a person may be removed from Office if convicted of a criminal offence.

## SECTION 5 - HOW TO APPLY

The competition to fill the Commissioner for Older People role is being administered by HRConnect on behalf of The Executive Office.

This appointment process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI) and the competition may be audited by the CPANI for compliance with the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

Application forms can be completed via the online application at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) or by hard copy. Hard copy and alternative formats of the application form (Braille, Large Print, etc.) can be requested by contacting HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or via email to [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net). Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability.

To ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:

- the space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and **must not** be altered; we **will not** accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms; and applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible writing using black ink.
- applicants are limited to a maximum 3,700 characters including spaces per criterion.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline.

Further information about public appointments, including how to complete an application form can be found at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/public-appointments](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/public-appointments)

We recommend applicants to read the 'Public Appointments Guide which provides an overview of Public Appointments in Northern Ireland and helpful information for those wishing to apply.

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/public-appointments-guide.pdf>

Completed hard copy application forms can be returned by post or hand delivered to the address below:

**HRConnect**

**PO Box 1089**

**Beacon House**

**27 Clarendon Road**

**Belfast**

**BT1 9EX**

Completed application forms should be submitted to HRConnect before the closing date of 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 16th August 2024. You will receive an acknowledgement following receipt of your application. **Late applications will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.** You should retain a copy of this booklet for your reference in the event that you are invited for interview. Please be aware that the Department may decide to extend the closing date for this competition. If this is the case, all applicants who have submitted an application by the original closing date/time will be informed.

### **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

The NICS is committed to ensuring that all eligible persons have equal opportunity for public appointments on the basis of their ability and aptitude for the role. Monitoring is carried out to help us ensure that our processes and procedures promote equality of opportunity as far as possible and therefore your help in completing and returning the monitoring form as part of your application would be appreciated. Please note the information you provide in the monitoring form will be detached from the information on the application form, held separately and will not be available to selection panels or to anyone else involved in the selection process. The information will be used for statistical purposes only and analysed independently by staff in the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in the strictest confidence.

### **Equal Opportunities Commitment**

TEO is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. TEO is committed to providing equality of opportunity and welcomes applications regardless of gender, age, marital status, disability, religion, ethnic origin, political opinion, sexual orientation or

whether or not you have dependents.

### **Guaranteed Interview Scheme**

We are operating the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for applicants with a disability.

The aim of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage.

Applicants with a disability who meet all of the essential criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place. To be eligible for the Guaranteed Interview Scheme you must be considered as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which defines a person with a disability as someone who has, or has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment, which has had a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (See **Annex E**). If you qualify and wish to apply for the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, please complete the appropriate section of the application form. This section of the application form will not be provided to the selection panel.

### **Accessibility Requirements**

Please let HRConnect know if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend the interview. Any information provided will be used for this purpose only and will not form any part of the selection process.

If you are subsequently successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

### **Applicant Expenses**

Candidates invited for interview are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses incurred within the UK and Republic of Ireland in attending for interview. These will be payable in line with NICS rates and policy. In the case of applicants not resident in Northern Ireland, flight costs and overnight accommodation costs (if necessary) will be paid at rates agreed with the Central Appointments Team in advance of travelling. The Central Appointment's Team can be contacted at [admin.cau@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:admin.cau@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

### **Requests for rescheduling of interviews**

Changes to interview dates/times **within** the assessment period may be possible in exceptional circumstances. However, it may not be possible to reschedule new dates outside of the assessment period.

### **Feedback**

The Department is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit public appointments are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (NI) Code of Practice.

The Department is also committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/shortlisting at sift will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. Further requests for feedback and request for feedback post interview must be requested by candidates in writing to HRConnect.

### **Changes in Contact Details**

Please ensure you inform HRConnect immediately of any changes in personal circumstances, such as name, address, email address or telephone number.

### **Complaints or Queries**

Should you wish to make a complaint or a query about any stage of this process, you should first direct your concerns to:

**HRConnect**

**PO Box 1089**

**Beacon House**

**27 Clarendon Road**

**Belfast**

**BT1 9EX**

**Email: [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)**

If after receiving a response you are still concerned, you can send your complaint, in writing, to the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Information on how to go about this is available in the CPA (NI) leaflet which is enclosed with this pack at **Annex D**.

### **Further Information**

Any applicant seeking additional information about Commissioner for Older People should contact Eddie Lynch at [Eddie.Lynch@copni.org](mailto:Eddie.Lynch@copni.org) or by calling 07545501240.

Any applicant wishing to raise a question about the competition process should contact HRConnect [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)



## **Further details on Selection Criteria – Examples of Evidence**

The additional information provided underneath each of the criteria below is intended to help explain what sort of information the panel will be expecting. As the selection panel will consider the strength and depth of the evidence provided it is the applicant's responsibility to make sure they provide sufficient detail to meet the criteria.

For each criterion, you should include examples of your experience, knowledge and skills (as appropriate). Examples can be drawn from experience gained in your personal life or in business, voluntary, community or public sector organisations. The examples of evidence provided below are not exhaustive.

### **Essential Criteria**

1. A clear understanding of the needs of older people here and the ability to engage effectively with them to best represent their interests and priorities.

Examples of evidence could include:

- Experience of engaging in an empathic and respectful manner with older people on a range of issues.
- Actively creating and maintaining constructive and collaborative working relationships and networks, with older people to make a positive change.
- Communicating effectively with a wide range of older people from different backgrounds, adapting the communication style appropriately.

2. Knowledge and understanding of key policies, legislation and services most directly impacting older people here; together with a demonstrable commitment to promoting and advancing their rights and best interests.

Examples of evidence could include:

- An in-depth awareness of current key challenges for older people in Northern Ireland.
- An understanding of how the rights and interests of older people can best be supported and displaying a passion/enthusiasm for doing so.
- Expertise to effectively take into consideration current and future factors, and wider challenges and opportunities facing older people.

3. Expert advocacy and negotiating skills, including the ability to command confidence and influence the decision making of government, statutory agencies and local government.

Examples of evidence could include:

- Ability to confidently engage with stakeholders and colleagues to challenge existing practices and improve outcomes.
- Use of persuasive and compelling arguments to influence others to understand and accept different perspectives and approaches.
- Displaying open-mindedness to respect a broad range of views and cultures to create an inclusive, positive environment.

4. Highly effective networking and communication skills and experience, including working with the media, in order to influence decision making.

Examples of evidence could include:

- A clear understanding of legislation affecting older people's rights.
- Experience of personal and effective involvement in promoting rights and best interests of specific groups of people.
- Experience of challenging the status quo to reduce inequalities for specific groups of people.

5. Experience of having made a positive impact in a leadership role<sup>2</sup>, which involved developing and communicating a vision for the future, through strategic thinking, people management and engagement; translating this into delivery of clear plans with measurable outcomes.

Examples of evidence could include:

- Effectively leading and setting an organisation's strategic vision.
- Creating the culture to deliver an organisation's aims and objectives.
- Experience of staff management and development and working within a team.
- Understanding legislative, financial and practical boundaries in difficult or complex situations.

6. Experience of delivering outcomes through the proactive management of significant financial resources and the application of best practice in relation to good governance, accountability and financial controls.

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<sup>2</sup> 'leadership role' is defined as: (i) someone who is/was involved in the provision of detailed advice that directly influenced strategic issues or who is/was personally involved in taking decisions on strategic/high level issues concerning the corporate body or organisation within which an individual is/was working; or (ii) membership of, or reporting at board level; or (iii) Senior Civil Servant or equivalent grade in the wider public sector.

Examples of evidence could include:

- Experience of managing a significant budget, including bidding for and securing resources, profiling, monitoring and managing spend within agreed tolerances.
- Overseeing effective governance within an organisation, including a framework of controls, assurance approach and agreed delegations.
- Identifying, evaluating and managing risks to an organisation.
- Experience in oversight of financial management with the ability to analyse information and take informed and evidence led decisions.

## **Shortlisting Criteria**

In addition, applicants should be aware that, after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the Selection Panel reserves the right to apply a scoring system to further shortlist candidates for interview.

Applicants will be ranked based on the total of their score awarded for the essential criteria. Only those candidates who have a total mark equal to or higher than the agreed cut-off will proceed to the interview stage. Should the number of candidates achieving the agreed cut-off mark be deemed by the Interview Panel to be insufficient, the Interview Panel may agree to lower the cut-off by increments until an adequate pool of candidates for interview is obtained.

**The Selection Panel will complete this assessment against the information provided by applicants in response to the eligibility criteria.**

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLICATION FORM AND INTERVIEW

If this is your first experience of a criteria-based selection process, bear in mind that it **does not** require you to:

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the criterion the question is designed to test.

A Criteria-based process **does** however require you to:

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfil the criteria required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required criteria areas.

When completing your application and in preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:

<b>Situation:</b>	Briefly outline the situation
<b>Task:</b>	What was your objective?; What were you trying to achieve?
<b>Action:</b>	What did you actually do? What was your unique contribution?
<b>Result:</b>	What happened? What was the outcome? What did you learn?

The Panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the criteria. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which appointments made on merit illustrate your skills and abilities in each criterion area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

**You are strongly advised to read the 'Public Appointments Guide' when preparing for interview - <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/public-appointments-guide-overview-public-appointments-northern-ireland-and-helpful-information>**

## PROBITY & CONFLICTS OF INTEREST – GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the information contained in the leaflet “CPANI Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and how to raise a complaint” which provides examples of the types of issues that may give rise to conflicts of interests – please see **Annex D**.

### **Standards of Behaviour**

Ministers expect that the conduct of those they appoint to serve in public office will be above reproach. Everyone who puts themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the maintenance of high standards in public life.

### **The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life**

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

- **Selflessness** – holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** – holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity** – holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability** – holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness** – holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty** – holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

As part of the selection process, you will be tested on your commitment to maintaining high standards in public life with particular emphasis on probity issues and conflicts of interest.

### **What is a conflict of interest?**

Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.

No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives a lot of media attention. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

### **Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?**

The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of an office holder can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that an office holder acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

### **What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?**

You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give the Selection Panel as much information as possible.

### **If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?**

No, each case is considered individually. If you are short-listed for interview, the Panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed.

However, if, following the discussion with you, the Panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the Office or the appointment they can withdraw your application from the competition. The summary of the outcome of the interview process, which is put to the Ministers, will include clear written reference to any probity issues or perceived or actual conflicts of interest connected to any candidate put forward as suitable for appointment. It will include sufficient information to ensure that the Ministers are fully aware of any of these matters and can make an informed decision.

### **What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by the Department after my appointment?**

Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached

the seven principles of conduct underpinning public life and may terminate your appointment.

**What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?**

This situation may arise where the applicant is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the Panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

**What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?**

This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.

In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Sponsoring Department to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.

It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue in their role,

You may be asked to sign a declaration of commitment to the above principles as a condition of your appointment.

## Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and How to raise a complaint



### Thank you for your interest in this appointment

Public bodies have an important role to play in the lives of everyone. Among other things, they help run our health and social care services, arrange our education services and provide a wide range of social, economic, cultural and environmental services. Appointments to boards of public bodies are commonly known as public appointments.

Public appointments are made by individual Government Ministers. If you decide to apply for a public appointment the administration of your application will be handled by civil servants in the relevant Department. The Commissioner regulates the selection process but is not involved in individual competitions.

Departments must follow the 'Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Northern Ireland', to ensure that appointments are made on merit, after fair and open competition. The Code of Practice covers Ministerial appointments to a wide range of boards and public bodies. A full list can be found on the CPANI website at [www.publicappointmentsni.org](http://www.publicappointmentsni.org). The Code of Practice is also there.

### Making a Complaint

If you apply for a public appointment, and you feel you have not been treated correctly, you may make a complaint.

The Commissioner is responsible for investigating complaints about public appointments. The Commissioner will look at the process used to make an appointment and the way an application was handled.

You should first raise your concerns with the relevant Department. If, after you have received a reply, you still feel you have not been treated correctly, you should contact CPANI using the contact details below.

Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI)

Stormont Castle - Interim

Stormont Estate

Upper Newtownards Road

Belfast

BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 905 24820

Email: [info@publicappointmentsni.org](mailto:info@publicappointmentsni.org)



## **Guidance on Conflicts of Interest and Integrity**

As part of the assessment process for a public appointment, you will be asked if you know of any possible conflicts of interest in connection with that appointment. Conflicts of interest are not always a barrier to appointment. However, all perceived, potential and real conflicts must be explored by the selection panel to ensure that the public can have confidence in the Board's independence and impartiality and in your position on that Board.

To give you an idea of what might constitute a conflict of interest here are a few examples of areas which could lead to a conflict of interest.

- You are the director of a building firm and the Board to which you are seeking appointment conducts regular procurement exercises for building materials. You could benefit personally from decisions taken by the Board.
- You are a manager in a voluntary organisation, whose funding applications are considered by the Board to which you are seeking appointment. The body for which you work could benefit financially from decisions taken by the Board.
- You have, in the past, contributed or lent significant funds to the political party to which the appointing Minister belongs. Your appointment could be viewed as a reward for past favours.

These are examples only. Please remember that identifying a conflict will not necessarily stop you being appointed. You should consider carefully your own circumstances to decide whether or not a perceived, potential or real conflict exists and be ready to discuss it with the Selection Panel at interview.

Even if you have not identified any conflicts of interest when applying for the post, you will still be asked about the issue if you are interviewed.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) has produced a good practice guide to conflicts of interest. This can be found on the NIAO website at [www.niauditoffice.gov.uk](http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk).

### **Integrity**

Anyone applying for a public appointment must understand and be committed to the principle of integrity. You will be asked about this at interview.

### **Feedback**

You may request feedback on the outcome of your application from the Department running this public appointment competition. This application pack contains relevant contact details. Feedback can be delivered in writing, by e-mail or by phone. It is up to you. It should be useful, jargon-free and based on the assessment of the selection panel. Please see paragraphs 3.48 and 3.49 of the Code of Practice.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is committed to ensuring that all eligible persons have equal opportunity for public appointments on the basis of their ability and aptitude for the role. Monitoring is carried out to help us ensure that our processes and procedures promote equality of opportunity as far as possible.

This section provides an explanation of the definition of disability.

### **Disability**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) provides protection for disabled persons against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The DDA defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

**Physical Impairment:** this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs etc) caused through illness by accident or from birth. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease.

**Mental Impairment:** this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability, and social functioning.

**Substantial:** put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day to day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

**Long-term adverse effect:** the effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one. A person with a life expectancy of less than 12 months is of course covered if the effect is likely to last for the whole of that time.

**A normal day to day activity:** this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something so individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

### ***What sort of effect must there be?***

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech; hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; ability to take part in normal social interaction and form social relationships; or perception of risk of physical danger.

***What happens if the effects are reduced by medication or other treatment?***

Broadly speaking, the effects that matter are those that would be present if there was no medication or treatment taking place. The exception is people who wear spectacles or contact lenses when what matters is the effect that remain while the spectacles or contact lenses are being used.

***Are there any types of condition covered by special provisions in the DDA?***

Yes, because some people with particular conditions might not otherwise be counted as disabled. These are provisions covering:

Recurring or fluctuating conditions such as arthritis, where the effects can sometimes be less than substantial, which are treated as continuing to have a substantial adverse effect so long as that effect is likely to recur;

Conditions which progressively deteriorate, such as motor neuron disease, which count as having a substantial effect from the first time they have any effect at all on ability to carry out normal day to day activities even if it is not substantial, so long as there is eventually likely to be a substantial adverse effect; and

People with cancer, HIV, or multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled people from the point of diagnosis, regardless of whether or not they have any symptoms.

***Are any conditions not covered?***

Yes, the following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:

Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from the substance being medically prescribed);

Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition;

Tendency to set fires, or steal, or physically or sexually abuse other persons;

Exhibitionism and voyeurism;

Severe disfigurements consisting of tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing are not treated as having substantial adverse effects.

***What if someone has recovered from a disability?***

Much of the DDA also applies to people who have had a disability in the past (for example, someone who was disabled by mental ill health) but have now fully recovered. People who were registered disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (NI) 1945 both on 12 January 1995 and 2 December 1996 will be regarded as having had a disability in the past if they do not in any case fall within the definition of the DDA.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without.

As with other forms of personal data, the obtaining, use, storage and disclosure of monitoring information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Access to

this data is restricted and misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.