Appointment of Deputy Ombudsman

Applicant Pack
Contents

Prior to completion of the application form candidates should familiarise themselves with the contents of this pack.

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Section A - Background to the new NIPSO Office

Legislation to establish the new position of Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) – the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (“the Act”) - has recently received Royal Assent and the new NIPSO office will be established on 1 April 2016.

The new legislation will impact on the powers, remit and functions currently exercised by the Assembly Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints. It will bring together the existing offices of Assembly Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints into a single statutory office. The Act will extend the Office’s remit, improve public access to redress, strengthen powers of investigation and increase the Office’s visibility and profile.

The Act may be accessed here.

NIPSO Legislation

The main effects of the NIPSO legislation are:

1. The offices of Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints (AOCC) will cease to exist and will be replaced by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) on 1 April 2016.

2. The current jurisdiction in employment matters will be removed and the jurisdiction in relation to commercial and contractual matters extended.

3. In addition to a wider range of public service providers NIPSO will have jurisdiction to investigate complaints about the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Assembly Commission and Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (in relation to judicial appointments).

4. From April 2018 the NIPSO will have power to investigate an issue on her ‘own initiative’ without first receiving a complaint.

5. NIPSO will also assume a new function of Complaints Standards Authority.

6. Significantly schedule 1 of the NIPSO Act also provides for accountability mechanisms through reporting to the Audit Committee of the NI Assembly in respect of use of the Offices Resources from 2017.

It is important to note that the statutory timetable for the new powers and remits is spread over a 3-4 year period, with new bodies coming into jurisdiction in 2016/17 and 2017/18, which will mean an increased volume of complaints. However the additional functions of ‘Own Initiative’ powers and Complaints Standards Authority will not come into effect until 2018/19 at the earliest. It is the latter two additional functions that will bring a major ‘sea change’ for the new Office.
Section B – Job Description

Reporting to: Ombudsman

Responsible for: Directors and support staff (as applicable)

Salary: £63,994 - £78,275

Location: Belfast

Main purpose of job

To support the Ombudsman in the discharge of the functions of the Office. To act under delegated authority of the Ombudsman across the full range of their statutory and managerial responsibilities. To play a central role in the delivery of high quality, responsive and timely investigations in response to complaints from members of the public. To ensure effective and efficient delivery of all investigative functions relating to complaints about maladministration in public services and judicial appointments as well as alleged breaches of the Local Government Code of Conduct.

Summary of principal duties and responsibilities

Complaints Handling Investigations

• Exercise full personal jurisdictional authority in all cases where the Ombudsman has delegated authority to the Deputy Ombudsman
• Provide advice, support and guidance to Directors and Investigating Officers on the investigation of all complaints to the Office;
• Identifying, briefing and liaising with professional and legal advisors in highly technical or legally complex cases;
• Leading sensitive and complex investigations as required;
• Where necessary, engage in direct interaction with complainants, public representatives and senior staff in bodies under investigation;
• Provision of advice to the Ombudsman as appropriate;
• Management of links to, and quality assurance of, external legal services provision to the Ombudsman;
• Provide advice on complex assessment decisions;
• Lead, manage and support Director level staff;

**Key corporate responsibilities and strategic development**

• Work with the Ombudsman in developing and delivering the organisation’s Strategic Objectives and Business Plans including financial performance;
• Lead the Directors in developing and delivering the organisation’s remit through effective implementation of the annual Business Plan;
• Work with the Senior Management Team to develop strategies, processes and systems that promote excellence and continuous improvement in Complaints Handling performance;
• Participate in the selection of staff as appropriate;
• Contribute to the delivery of training and provide coaching to staff as appropriate;
• Demonstrate a commitment to the principles of equality and human rights, fairness and diversity in all aspects of work.

**Organisational performance delivery and monitoring**

• Ensure the effective management of the NIPSO powers and new jurisdictions;
• Support the Ombudsman to ensure a smooth transition to the establishment of the NIPSO office;
• Ensure effective systems for managing and monitoring operational and individual performance and Quality Assurance are in place;
• Monitor and report to the Ombudsman on the performance of the Investigation Teams and corporate services function against agreed standards, targets and key performance indicators;
• Act as Contract Manager in monitoring and evaluating the delivery of services provided by external contractors as appropriate;
• Investigate and report on complaints about Directors.
**Stakeholder engagement and Outreach work**

- Support the Ombudsman in building relationships with the Northern Ireland Assembly and all bodies within NIPSO's jurisdiction;
- Accompany and support the Ombudsman to evidence sessions at the NI Assembly Committees as appropriate;
- Engage and foster relationships with other regulatory bodies and the wider Ombudsman community both locally and internationally;
- Represent the Office in delivering presentations to a wide stakeholder audience and contributing to conferences and training courses organised by external bodies;
- Represent the Ombudsman at conferences and meetings at local, national and international level;
- Build relationships and shared working with other Ombudsmen and relevant membership organisations;
- Provide briefings and responses as required and engage with local and national media so as to increase NIPSO profile.

**Governance and Risk Management**

- Ensure that standards of good governance are developed and maintained;
- Ensure risk management mechanisms are appropriate and proportionate to the risk appetite of the Office;
- Ensure an organisational focus on VFM, efficiency, effectiveness and best practice;
- Ensure that the Office complies with relevant statutory and regulatory responsibilities;
- Lead and contribute as required to the work of the Senior Management Team and in particular the Audit Committee;
- Perform the role and duties of the Senior Information Risk Owner for the Office.

**General Responsibilities & Duties**

- Adhere to and promote the Office policies on Equality of Opportunity and Dignity at Work, demonstrating a commitment to the principles of human rights, equality, fairness and diversity in all aspects of work;
• Have due regard for your own safety and that of others, behaving appropriately at all times and reporting all accidents no matter how minor;
• Take responsibility for the development of own skills and knowledge through proactive engagement in the internal performance review processes;
• Undertake ad-hoc, cross-functional project work supporting the development of the Office and service provision as reasonably requested by your line manager;
• Foster and maintain good working relationships with and between colleagues and with other organisations.
THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

The Committee on Standards in Public Life have defined seven principles (‘the Nolan Principles’) which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way.

Accordingly, in carrying out the above duties, the postholder shall adhere at all times to the following principles:

1. Selflessness - Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

2. Integrity - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

3. Objectivity - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

4. Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

5. Openness - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

6. Honesty - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

7. Leadership - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.
Section C – Person Specification

Essential Criteria

By the closing date for applications, candidates must:

1. Have a minimum of five years experience of leadership and management at a senior* level;

2. Have experience of successfully leading/implementing organisational performance improvement interventions and initiatives;

3. Have experience of applying analytical skills at a senior level to reach sound and impartial conclusions in a complex and high-profile environment;

4. Be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the role of the Ombudsman within the administrative justice system;

5. Possess highly developed influencing and communication skills when dealing with a wide range of stakeholders, for example members of the public, public bodies, elected representatives, community organisations, staff and the media.

You will be expected to demonstrate the above experience, competences and skills on your application form and subsequently at interview.

Desirable Criteria

In addition, applicants should be aware that should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview the following shortlisting criteria will be used:

- Experience of leading on sensitive investigations in a challenging and high profile environment;
- Experience of designing, developing and improving complaints handling systems within the private or public sector
- **Qualified solicitor or barrister.

* senior level – being a member of your organisation’s ‘Senior Management Team’ or ‘Top Management Team’ or where you can demonstrate that you actively contributed to setting the strategic direction of that organisation.

**If invited to interview candidates will be asked to bring with them evidence of their legal qualification.
Section D – The Application and Selection Process

**MAKING AN APPLICATION**

Application forms can be obtained by writing to the NIPSO Office at the address below, or emailing patrick.mcauley@ni-ombudsman.org.uk or from the website: www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk

Completed application forms, in which you should clearly demonstrate how you meet the eligibility criteria, must be returned to:

Patrick McAuley  
HR Project Manager  
Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman,  
Progressive House,  
33 Wellington Place,  
Belfast,  
BT1 6HN

Alternatively, application and monitoring forms can be returned by email to patrick.mcauley@ni-ombudsman.org.uk.

Applications must be returned not later than **12 noon on Friday 8th April 2016**.

Candidates are reminded that the application form must be fully completed, including the Equality Monitoring and Conflict of Interest sections. Incomplete application forms will not be considered. CVs, letters or any other supplementary material will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms. Only that information presented within the application form will be considered by the selection panel.

The NIPSO Office may decide to interview only those applicants who appear to them, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant qualifications and experience. It is therefore essential that applicants fully describe in the application form how they meet the experience and qualities sought. It is not appropriate simply to list the various posts that an applicant has held. The NIPSO Office will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant’s post as to the skills and experience gained.

**APPLICATION FORMS WHICH DO NOT PROVIDE THE NECESSARY DETAILED INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA WILL BE REJECTED.**

Please keep responses limited to the space provided and where applications are being typed ensure that the font is Arial with a minimum of size 10.
THE APPOINTMENT

Assessment Centre

Candidates who successfully demonstrate that they meet the essential criteria will be invited to attend an assessment centre which will assess the candidates against the core competencies identified for the post of Deputy Ombudsman. It is envisaged that the assessment centre will take place in the week commencing the 25th April 2016 however this may be subject to change. Only those candidates who are successful at the assessment centre will be invited to attend for interview.

Interview

Candidates who successfully complete the assessment centre will be invited to attend for interview. It is intended that interviews will take place in Belfast in early May.

Prior to the interview, candidates will be provided with sufficient time to prepare an ‘unseen presentation’ to deliver to the interview panel. A formal interview will follow immediately after. The presentation/interview will allow the panel to assess the extent to which each candidate meets the criteria in the person specification.

It is NIPSO policy that all candidates invited to attend for interview bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for interview.

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

Principles of the Appointment

NIPSO is committed to providing and promoting equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified candidates regardless of gender, age, marital status, disability, religion, race, political opinion, sexual orientation or whether or not they have dependents.

All applications will be considered strictly on the basis of merit.

Pre-Employment vetting

Applicants are required in their application forms to provide the names and contact details of two individuals to be contacted as referees, one of whom should be your current or most recent employer. Referees will only be contacted in the event of an offer of employment being made.

The successful candidates will also be subject to basic AccessNI check prior to taking up appointment.

Any offer of employment is conditional on receipt of two satisfactory references and a basic AccessNI check.
**Location**

The post will be based at NIPSO premises at Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 3BG.

**Further Information**

If you have any further queries regarding the recruitment and selection process then please email Patrick McAuley (patrick.mcauley@ni-ombudsman.org.uk) or telephone (02890) 897783.
Section E – Terms & Conditions of Employment

- The salary for this post is currently equivalent to Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) (Senior Civil Service) Grade 5 £63,994 - £78,275;

- The successful candidate will be eligible to join the NICS Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme.

- This is a full-time (37 hours per week) and permanent position, subject to a probationary period of four months. Extra hours will be required from time to time in order to meet the demands of the post. Some travel, throughout Britain and Ireland as well as overseas, will also be required from time to time;

- Annual leave entitlement is 30 days, plus 12 public holidays.

- The post is based at NIPSO, Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN.