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**Candidate Information Booklet**

**Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland**

**Lay Adviser**

This Booklet and the Application Form can be requested in alternative formats

From the Public Protection Coordinator

T: 028 90259612 | E: Julie.smyth@publicprotectionni.gsi.gov.uk

You are advised keep a copy of this booklet for future reference

Completed Application Forms must be returned to thePublic Protection Coordinator at [Julie.smyth@publicprotectionni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.smyth@publicprotectionni.gsi.gov.uk) or the

Public Protection Arrangements NI, Secretariat Office, Sea Park Complex,

151 Belfast Rd, Carrickfergus, County Antrim, BT38 8PL

**no later than 3pm on Tuesday 28 June 2022**

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The Department of Justice and the Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland are committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process.

We are also committed to providing equality of opportunity. We welcome applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of gender, age, marital status, disability, religious belief, ethnic origin, political opinion, sexual orientation, or whether or not you have dependents. Applications are welcome from individuals irrespective of gender identity, including those proposing to undergo, who are undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants with a disability.

Whilst this is not a CPANI regulated competition, DOJ/PPANI will act in accordance with the principles and practices of the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI)

**Section 1 Introduction**

1. The Police Service Northern Ireland, Probation Board Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Prison Service, Health & Social Services and certain other agencies and public bodies (have a statutory duty to cooperate) are required by law to work together to jointly assess and manage the risks posed to the public by certain offenders in the community.
2. The oversight of arrangements is the responsibility of Strategic Management Boards (“the Boards”) which include representatives of all the relevant agencies and bodies. Oversight and review of the various public protection arrangements is undertaken by Strategic Management Boards comprising senior representatives of participating agencies and bodies along with lay advisers appointed by the Department of Justice. They operate under various guidance issued by the Minister of Justice under Article 50 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008.
3. Under Article 51 (2) of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, the Minister of Justice appoints lay advisers to assist the Boards in fulfilling their oversight function and their role, as full Board members, is to provide an objective lay perspective on the operation of the relevant arrangements.
4. **This recruitment is for the appointment of three Lay Advisers in respect of the Public Protection Arrangements N Ireland (PPANI).**
5. To protect the “lay” status of those appointed, certain people are ineligible to apply due to their current/previous employment and/or engagement in designated activities or becoming ineligible subsequent to appointment by taking on such a role/activity, namely

* Members of Parliament or the NI Legislative Assembly;
* Members of the House of Lords;
* Members of the European Parliament;
* Local Councillors;
* Civil servants at the Department of Justice;
* Civil servants at the Northern Ireland Office;
* Members of staff from any criminal justice agency (and within seven years of leaving such employment);
* Current members of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland;
* Current members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board;
* Current members of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships;
* Current members of prison independent monitoring boards;
* Anyone who is conducting research on subjects that fall within the remit of PPANI (and within eight years of completing such research);
* Anyone whose paid employment involves working with offenders that fall within the remit of PPANI.  A similar exclusion may apply to voluntary work where the primary focus is with sexual and violent offenders within the PPANI arrangements; and
* Anyone who through personal or family circumstances may not be able to provide an unbiased view of PPANI.

1. Applicants wishing to learn more about the post or the recruitment process may contact the PPANI Coordinator at the PPANI Secretariat office.

**Section 2 Role Profile and Terms of Appointment**

**Role and Duties**

1. Lay Advisors have a strategic responsibility to monitor and evaluate public protection arrangements. Their lay status allows them to look at operational practice and bring a challenge function to the professionals when the relevant Strategic Management Boards exercises their function of monitoring the effectiveness of the relevant public protection arrangements.
2. The responsibilities of the Lay Adviser include to:

* Contribute as an informed observer to the work of the agencies in reviewing how the arrangements operate in practice.
* Observe agencies’ roles in the review and reporting functions; this does not involve taking part in the assessment and risk management process for individual offenders.
* Forward plan in cooperation with the PPANI coordinator, by producing a quarterly programme of activities/business they plan to undertake to be presented to the Board.
* Regularly attend Local Area Public Protection Panel (LAPPP) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Panel (MARAP) meetings as an observer to inform their effective contribution to monitoring and evaluating the arrangements.
* Participate on a regular basis in strategic sub-groups of the relevant Boards; lay advisers should use this opportunity to comment on, question and contribute to the agencies’ decision making on strategic issues.
* Contribute to business plans and the communications strategy; lay advisers can take the opportunity to comment on all draft business plans both at the sub groups and when they are presented to the relevant Boards for adoption.
* Provide a quarterly written report to the relevant Boards which will be tabled for discussion at every meeting; these reports should outline activities undertaken since the previous meeting and highlight issues the lay adviser wishes to raise.
* Contribute to the strategic review of statistics on PPANI performance to provide a lay input to the interpretation of management information; and to be familiar with, understand and be able to question the extent and effectiveness of the resources used by the agencies (number of LAPPPS, cases dealt with every month, number of cases of reoffending/breach etc).
* Contribute to the preparation of relevant annual reports through responding to consultations’ on drafts and providing a dedicated section in the report.
* Attend relevant conferences and training events with the agreement of the relevant Boards.

**Period of Appointment and Termination**

1. The appointment is offered on the basis of a single three-year term with the option of reapplying for a second term which may be considered subject to satisfactory performance during the initial period of office, continued adherence to the principles of public life and subject to the ineligibility rules above. Ultimately, the decision to re-appoint will rest with the Justice Minister. In accordance with the Code of Practice issued by CPANI, appointments for the same position are restricted to two terms. The successful applicant will be expected to take up the appointment on or before 1 September 2022.
2. An annual appraisal review with each PPANI Lay Adviser will be carried out by the Chair of the Strategic Management Board.

1. Lay advisers are required to inform the Chair of the Strategic Management Board of any change in personal, family or employment circumstances that could potentially affect their suitability to carry out their role. Successful applicants will be expected to sign a declaration which confirms they will report any subsequent change in their circumstances post-appointment.
2. The duty to inform includes being charged or summonsed for any criminal offence or a change in employment, voluntary activity or active interest that could be perceived as a potential conflict of interest with their role as lay adviser. It includes any circumstances which a member of the public could reasonably regard as being so significant as to compromise the lay adviser’s ability to discharge his or her duties effectively and objectively.
3. The Department of Justice retains the right to recommend to the Minister termination of the appointment of any lay adviser whose personal conduct or performance is considered not to be of the required standard. Misconduct will include lack of commitment, conviction for a criminal offence, unauthorised disclosure of information or abusing their position as a lay adviser.

**Time Commitment and Remuneration**

1. The role requires a commitment of 8-16 hours per month.
2. This is a part-time post attracting remuneration of £2,500 per annum and is non-pensionable.
3. The main offices are located at the Seapark Complex, Belfast Road, Carrickfergus, BT38 8PL.
4. The role may involve some travel within Northern Ireland for which expenses are payable at Northern Ireland Civil Service rates. Reasonable costs associated with disabilities, dependent carer or childcare can also be claimed where applicable subject to confirmation of payment.
5. All remuneration and expenses are eligible in respect of income tax and national insurance declarations. These deductions are not taken at source and it will be the responsibility of the individual Lay Adviser to make the necessary declarations to the relevant authority.

**Double Paying**

1. Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that no one can be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. Applicants in these circumstances, may not be entitled to claim remuneration or expenses. Each case will be examined on its own merits but the key consideration is to obtain clarity so that individuals are reimbursed once and not twice from the public purse. In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying, the Department reserves the right to seek confirmation from an employer regarding an individual’s candidature.

**Section 3 Selection Criteria**

1. No specific academic qualifications are required for these appointments.
2. DOJ/PPANI uses a criteria-based selection process in which applicants are required to submit evidence of competency against five essential criteria. All criteria carry equal weight. Candidates are expected to provide evidence (by way of example) to demonstrate that they have appropriate qualities, skills, knowledge and experience. You will need to demonstrate, both on the application form and at interview, how you meet the five criteria.
3. Essential Criteria in respect of this appointment are:
4. Community Engagement
5. Social and Communication Skills
6. Informed and Objective Judgement
7. Monitoring and review
8. Personal Resilience and Sensitivity

**(1) Community Engagement**

A Lay Adviser is expected to have experience of working with others on community and social issues. As a Lay Adviser you will bring the knowledge, skills and experience you have gained from working with others on social and community issues to your role in PPANI.

**Examples of the type of evidence the panel will be looking for:**

* Working on specific community and/or social issues.
* Involvement in community projects or initiatives.
* Active participation in a network.
* Working collaboratively with a range of groups, individuals and/or organisation to achieve a better outcome.
* Advocating on behalf of a group or issue.

**(2) Social and Communication Skills**

A Lay Adviser plays an important role, along with the agencies involved within public protection, in enhancing public understanding of the PPANI process. As a Lay Adviser you will need to have good social and communication skills and the ability to work constructively with people in groups and formal meetings.

**Examples of the type of evidence the panel will be looking for:**

* Making complex information user friendly.
* Dealing with conflicting information and different views.
* Communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm.
* Facilitating discussion to reach consensus.

**(3) Informed and Objective Judgement**

A Lay Advisor is an informed observer to the agencies’ work in reviewing the operation of the public protection arrangements. As a Lay Advisor you will have to make objective judgements based on understanding complex facts and a significant amount of information from a range of written and verbal sources.

**Examples of the type of evidence the panel will be looking for:**

* Gathering verbal and written information.
* Analysing and evaluating information and statistics.
* Using evidence to identify the main issues in complex challenges.
* Making recommendations and/or decisions based on information and evidence.

**(4) Monitoring and Review**

A Lay Adviser plays an important role in the scrutiny and oversight arrangements of the effectiveness of the PPANI process. As a Lay Advisor you will have the ability to challenge constructively the views and assumptions of senior professionals.

**Examples of the type of evidence the panel will be looking for:**

* Questioning of an issue or practice that has led to a better outcome.
* Introducing/proposing a new approach or solution to a longstanding practice.
* Using evidence and logical argument to persuade.
* Influencing and negotiating to achieve consensus.

**(5) Personal Resilience and Sensitivity**

*The issues and cases discussed by the PPANI Strategic Management Board can be distressing and emotionally challenging at times. As a Lay Advisor you will need to be sensitive and emotionally resilient whilst dealing with tragic and painful human situations, in particular being able to understand the needs and feelings of victims.*

**Examples of the type of evidence the panel will be looking for:**

* Sensitivity and understanding of other’s perspectives.
* Handling sensitivities and conflict constructively.
* Developing options and problem solving.
* Coping mechanisms.

**Section 4 Application and Selection Process**

**Selection Panel**

1. The members of the selection panel are:

Anthony McNally, PSNI (Chair)

Steven Allison, Department of Justice

Kathleen Taylor, Department of Justice

Bronagh Hinds, Independent Assessor allocated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI.

**Application Form**

1. A criteria-based selection process requires applicants to provide evidence which demonstrates that they meet the requirements. The application form is designed to enable applicants to provide the necessary information to allow them to be assessed against the essential criteria.
2. You must demonstrate clearly on the application form how and to what extent your experience is relevant to the criteria for the post. The Selection Panel will not make assumptions from the title of your post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills or experience gained. It is not enough simply to list the various posts that you have held, and the mere mention of a skill or attribute is insufficient.
3. You should give specific examples that demonstrate your abilities and competencies that make you suitable for this appointment. Skills, knowledge and experience can be acquired throughout life. DOJ/PPANI will recognise less traditional career patterns and experiences such as community involvement and voluntary work as well as in the employment field. Therefore, you may use examples from your working or personal life, e.g. part-time activities or leisure activities and any voluntary or community work you are or have been involved in.
4. Make sure you take full advantage to provide practical evidence and examples of how your skills are suitable for this appointment. See the General Guidance on Criteria Based Selection in Annex A, which also includes a link to the*Public Appointments Guide* produced by The Executive Office and contains guidance on the completion of criteria-based application forms.
5. All relevant sections of the application form must be completed. If there are several aspects to a criterion, ensure you provide evidence that shows how you meet all aspects.
6. Please note that

* No information other than that supplied under the criteria in the application form will be taken into account. CVs, letters or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms will not be accepted.
* Online copies of the application form are preferred but hard copies are accepted. Application forms should be completed clearly using typescript minimum font size 12, or block capitals in black ink in hard copy.
* Applicants are limited to a maximum of 400 words per criterion. Any information over and above the word count will be redacted by the administration team and not seen by the selection panel.
* Hard copy and alternative formats (braille, large print, audio formats) of the application form are available on request.

1. **The closing date for application is 3pm on Tuesday 28 June 2022**. The date and time of receipt of applications will be recorded. It is the applicant’s responsibility, taking into account their chosen delivery method, to ensure that their application arrives by the deadline. Late applications will not be accepted except in exceptional circumstance where it can demonstrated to the panel that failure of the application to arrive by the closing date was beyond the applicant’s control.
2. Your application will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt. If you do not receive acknowledgement within 3 working days you should contact the Public Protection Coordination Unit on 028 90259612.

**Eligibility Sift and Shortlisting**

1. The sift and short-listing process will be anonymised. Panel members will assess each application against the essential criteria, using a marking frame to determine how an applicant’s skills, knowledge and experience meet the criteria.  Applicants will be awarded a score out of five for each criterion. All criteria are weighted equally. Applicants must achieve a pass mark of **three** or above in all five criteria.
2. Applications which do not meet the essential criteria will be sifted out. Those applicants assessed as meeting the criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of shortlisting or interview.
3. DOJ/PPANI operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet or exceed the pass marks set for the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any shortlisting which may take place.
4. If, after the eligibility sift, it is necessary to shortlist, the selection panel has agreed that applicants must achieve an overall pass mark of 20 out of a possible score of 25 to be invited for interview.
5. Should there be an insufficient pool of applicants achieving the required score of 20, the panel may consider reducing the overall pass mark by one mark each time until a sufficient pool of suitable applicants for interview is reached.
6. All those sifted out or not shortlisted will be advised by letter. Feedback will be provided upon request.
7. If an applicant wishes to contest the Panel’s decision, they should do so within 5 working days following the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome OR of their feedback. Further details about the process will be provided in the outcome letter.

**Interview Arrangements**

1. **Interviews will take place on 21st and 22nd July 2022** in Belfast. Candidates should make themselves available on this date. Reschedule requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be at the discretion of the panel.
2. Interviews will be carried out in line with COVID regulations in place at the time. It is intended that interviews will be face-to-face, but may be conducted remotely depending on COVID circumstances at the time. Remote interviews may be considered at the discretion of the panel.
3. Candidates invited to interview are eligible to claim for reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses incurred within Northern Ireland in attending for interview. Reasonable costs associated with disabilities, dependent carer or childcare can also be claimed where applicable subject to confirmation of payment.

**Competence-Based Interviews**

1. Shortlisted applicants will participate in a competence-based scored interview. Competence-based interviewing tests candidates against the specific selection criteria for a particular appointment. The application form gives you an opportunity to provide examples relevant to the essential criteria. These, in turn, provide the selection panel with information and evidence about you, and a deeper understanding of your abilities.
2. The interview is a crucial part of the appointment process and thorough preparation is essential. You can prepare for the interview by:

* reading and thoroughly understanding the selection criteria;
* reminding yourself of the examples you used in your application form and being prepared to expand on these at interview, if asked;
* rehearsing how you might relate your experiences to the interview panel, emphasising your own role and responsibilities; and
* not assuming that your qualities and experience will speak for themselves.

1. At interview, all candidates must satisfy the Panel that they meet all the criteria. The Panel will assess and score applicants using a marking frame to determine how an applicant’s skills, knowledge and experience meet the criteria. Applicants will be awarded a score out of five for each criterion and the pass mark is three; all criteria are weighted equally.
2. Subject to issues of probity or potential conflicts of interest which may emerge during the interview, those found suitable for appointment will be ranked in merit order for consideration for appointment.

**Selection and Appointment**

1. The three highest scoring candidates will be recommended for appointment as lay advisers to the Minister of Justice with whom the decision regarding an appointment rests. The Minister will receive applicant summaries from the Selection Panel that provide an objective analysis of each applicant’s skills and experience, based on the information provided by the applicant during the appointment process and the Panel’s assessment of that applicant.
2. A reserve list of applicants found suitable for appointment will be retained in the event that the appointed candidates do not take up the offer of posts or another lay adviser vacancy arises within 12 months from the appointment by the Minister of Justice.

1. Applicants whose names are being put forward for appointment will be advised by letter following interview. Then, if you are selected for appointment by the Minister, you will be formally notified in writing and will be required to confirm acceptance of the post and Terms of Appointment.
2. The remaining applicants who have been assessed as suitable for appointment will be advised that their name has been included on the reserve list.
3. Unsuccessful applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome once the appointment process has been completed. This will include options for requesting further feedback.

**Section 5 Probity and Conflicts of Interest**

1. DOJ/PPANI SMB must ensure that the individuals appointed are committed to the seven principles of conduct underpinning public life and values of public service. These principles are: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. Candidates will be asked questions on probity and conflicts of interests at interview. The successful candidates will be asked as part of their appointment to sign a declaration committing to the seven principles.
2. DOJ/PPANI 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. Failure to do so could lead to the appointment being terminated.
3. 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. If it appears, from the information provided on the form and/or from answers to questions at interview, that a possible conflict might exist, or arise in the future, this will be fully explored with the applicant with a view to establishing whether it is sufficiently significant to prevent the individual from carrying out the duties of the post. This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in the board’s independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointees.
4. Please read the guidance for candidates on Public Life Principles, Probity & Conflicts of Interest in Annex B, which provides information on these issues, and includes links to *Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and How to raise a complaint* produced by the Office of the Commissioner of Public Appointments Northern Ireland and the NI Audit Office’s *Conflicts of Interest: Good Practice Guide*.

**Section 6 Access NI, Vetting/Barring Checks & SC Clearance**

**Access NI**

1. The successful candidates will be subject to an Access NI check at enhanced level. The Access NI code of practice can be accessed via [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni).
2. The criminal record check undertaken by Access NI is under the responsibility of the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland and operates under the provisions of Part V of the Police Act 1997. Access NI enables informed recruitment decisions by providing criminal history information about anyone seeking paid or unpaid work in certain defined areas, such as working with children or vulnerable adults.

**Barred List Checks**

1. The Disclosure and Barring Service keeps two barred lists:

* people who are unsuitable for working with children
* people who are unsuitable for working with vulnerable adults

People on these lists are barred from regulated activity with children and vulnerable adults. It is a criminal offence for anyone who is included on a barred list to work or seek work, in regulated activity. Candidates should be aware that by submitting an application form for this post, they are confirming there is no reason why they cannot work in regulated activity.

**Section 7 Equal Opportunities and Additional Information**

**Disability Requirements**

1. We ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend the interview. Details of any disability are used only for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you indicate on your application that you have a disability and are 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.

**Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

1. The Department of Justice 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 is 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 the selection panel or to anyone else involved in the selection process.

**Privacy Notice**

1. Your privacy is important to us and The Department of Justice will process your personal data in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 – General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A Copy of The Department of Justice Privacy Notice is available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/doj-core-privacy-notice.pdf>

**Changes in Contact Details**

1. Please ensure you inform the Public Protection Coordination Unit immediately of any changes in personal circumstances, such as name, address, email address or telephone number.

**Section 8 Complaints Procedure**

1. If at any stage you feel you have reason to complain you should direct your concerns in the first instance to:

Alison Redmond

Public Protection Branch

Department of Justice

Block B, Castle Buildings

Stormont Estate

Belfast, BT4 3SG

E: [Alison.Redmond@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Alison.Redmond@justice-ni.gov.uk)

1. Whilst this is not a CPANI regulated competition, it is being carried out, as far as practicable, in accordance with the principles and practices of the CPANI Code. If you remain dissatisfied you may then write to:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (CPANI)

Dundonald House

Annexe B

Stormont Estate

Upper Newtownards Road

Belfast, BT4 3S

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

Annex A

**GENERAL GUIDANCE ON CRITERIA BASED SELECTION**

**Criteria Based Selection Process**

Criteria based selection is currently the most common method of making public appointments in Northern Ireland. What this means is that the onus is on you to provide evidence of workplace or personal performance which demonstrates that you can perform to the specified standard.

Under each of the criteria headings in the application form, you are required to provide specific and relevant examples of past behaviour which illustrate how you match the competences being sought. It is not just ***what*** you have done – but also ***how*** you did it.

You can use examples from your working life or personal life including any private, voluntary or community work you are, or have been, involved in.

It is not appropriate to simply list the various posts that you have held. Assumptions will not be made from the title of your post or the nature of the organisation as to the experience, qualities and skills gained.

You should structure your responses by setting a context for your examples, explain what you were trying to achieve, describe what you actually did and why, indicating your own individual contribution and outline the outcome or results.

**Criteria Based Interview**

If this is your first experience of a criteria based interview, 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 interview 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 criterion.

**In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as in the STAR model:**

**Situation:** Briefly outline the situation

**Task:** What was your objective? What were you trying to achieve?

**Action:** What did you actually do? What was your unique contribution?

**Result:** What happened? What was the outcome? What did you learn?

The Interview 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 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/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/public-appointments-guide.pdf>

**Annex B**

**Public Life Principles, Probity and Conflicts of Interest**

**Guide for Candidates**

*This guidance should be read in conjunction with the information contained in the leaflet produced by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland* [“*Guidance Leaflet on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and how to raise a complaint*](https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/publications)*” which provides examples of the types of issues that may give rise to conflicts of interests and the* [NIAO Conflicts of Interest: Good Practice Guide](https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/conflicts-interest-good-practice)*.*

**Standards of behaviour**

Ministers expect that the conduct of those they appoint to serve on the boards of public bodies will be above reproach. Everyone who put themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the principles and values of public service and 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 act 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.

**Integrity & Conflicts of Interest**

DoJ will take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. Therefore, in your application form, you must disclose information or personal connections, which, if you were to be appointed, could lead to a conflict of interest or be perceived as such. Conflicts of interest may not be a barrier to appointment but both real and perceived conflicts must be discussed with all candidates by the Interview Panel. This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in the board’s independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointees. Below is further information on this subject.

**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 and the board that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a board member 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 a Member 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 on the board and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings where an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. 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 board or the appointment, they can withdraw your application from the competition.

The report on the outcome of the interview process which is put to the Minister 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 Minister is 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 DoJ after my appointment?**

Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but DoJ 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 candidate 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 on the board 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 Chair of the board and the Chief Executive of the body concerned, in consultation 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 on the board, if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body’s routine business. In such, cases, the Member may be asked to stand down from the board.

**Current and former civil servants**

If you already work or worked in the public sector you need to be aware that:

* You may be ineligible for consideration for this appointment if in DoJ’s view there is a conflict of interest or the perception of a conflict, between the appointment and your existing or previous commitments (some identified in paragraph 5).
* Where applicable you will be asked to confirm that you have permission from your employer to take up an appointment if one is offered (see also paragraph 19 regarding double paying).
* If you are a former Civil Servant or equivalent Home Civil Servant you are subject to rules on the Acceptance of Outside Business Appointments, Employment or Self-Employment for a period of up to two years after leaving the NI Civil Service and so should check your eligibility to apply with your former Department.