



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Note

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Paper 92/14

17 September 2014

NIAR 449-14

**Public Finance Scrutiny Unit**

# Staffing levels in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

This Briefing Note provides an update to RalSe Paper 16/12 *Staffing levels in the Northern Ireland Civil Service*<sup>1</sup>. It presents available headcount data for staffing levels for 2012 to 2014.

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<sup>1</sup>RalSe (2011), available online at:  
[http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2012/finance\\_personnel/1612.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2012/finance_personnel/1612.pdf) (accessed 15 Sept 2014)

## Introduction

RaISe paper 16/12 *Staffing levels in the Northern Ireland Civil Service* examined headcount data from 2000 to 2011. This Briefing Note presents data for 2012 to 2014. It should be noted at the outset that the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has advised RaISe that the way headcount data is recorded has changed. It is not possible therefore, to present a consistent time series from 2000 to present.

This Note is structured in the following way:

- Section 1 explains the discontinuity in headcount data;
- Section 2 presents headcount data, by department and by grade 2012-14; and,
- Section 3 provides some concluding remarks.

## 1. Discontinuity in headcount data

In order to provide an update to paper 16/12, RaISe requested data from NISRA. NISRA statisticians advised that it is not possible to provide consistent data over the period 2000 to 2014 for the following reasons:

- *It is not possible to update the NICS headcount grade data for 2000-2011. Firstly, in line with our data management policy files preceding 2003 have been deleted. Therefore we no longer hold data for the years 2000, 2001 or 2002. Secondly, given that the purpose of the data update request was to enable consistent comparison over time, changes in the NICS and in-branch mean that like for like comparison over time is not possible. For example:*
- *Between 2002 and 2004 the Industrial Development Board was replaced by Invest NI. This reduced the NICS headcount by 400;*
- *In 2007 the NICS headcount figure was reduced by 1700 when NI Water was created;*
- *In 2008 1200 staff moved over to the PSNI staff;*
- *Since 2010 the devolution of Policing and Justice has also impacted on the NICS headcount figure. For example, during 2010, 1,000 staff from the NI Court Service and Youth Justice Agency came to be included in the NICS headcount. During 2012, 1,700 Uniformed Prison staff became included. With regard to grade, the picture in DOJ is further complicated as the process to allocate all DOJ occupational groups to grades equivalent to those in the NICS General Service is not yet complete; and,*
- *Within branch, how we analyse NICS headcount data analysis has changed to reflect business need. For example, since 2012 we include all NICS staff in the twelve Ministerial Departments plus a small number in the HSENI, AOCC and the HIA Inquiry Team. The only group excluded are those NICS staff on career break. Prior to 2011, casual and/or industrial staff had been excluded.*
- *In combination, such changes mean that what makes up the NICS has changed over the years 2000-current. The result is that consistent comparison of like for like over time is not possible.<sup>2</sup>*

For these reasons, RaISe is unable to provide a headcount data time series from 2000 to date. **The following section therefore examines data for 2012, 2013 and 2014 only.**

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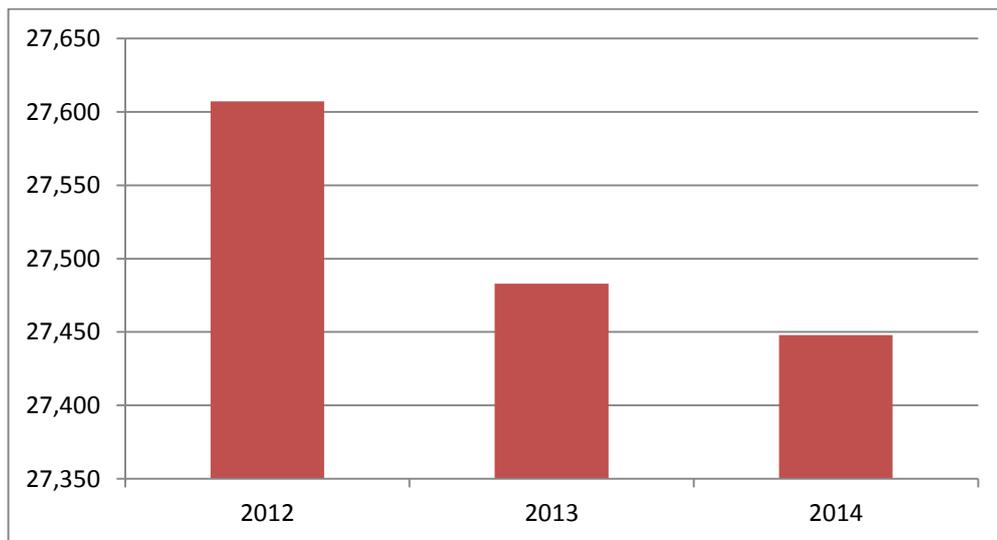
<sup>2</sup>E-mail from NISRA official to RaISe, 11 August 2014

## 2. Headcount data 2012 to 2014

NISRA records and publishes headcount data, disaggregated by grade and department, for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).<sup>3</sup> The data also includes the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), which is a non-ministerial department. This section shows the headcount data, firstly in total, then disaggregated by grade.

### 2.1. Total NICS and PPS headcount 2012 to 2014

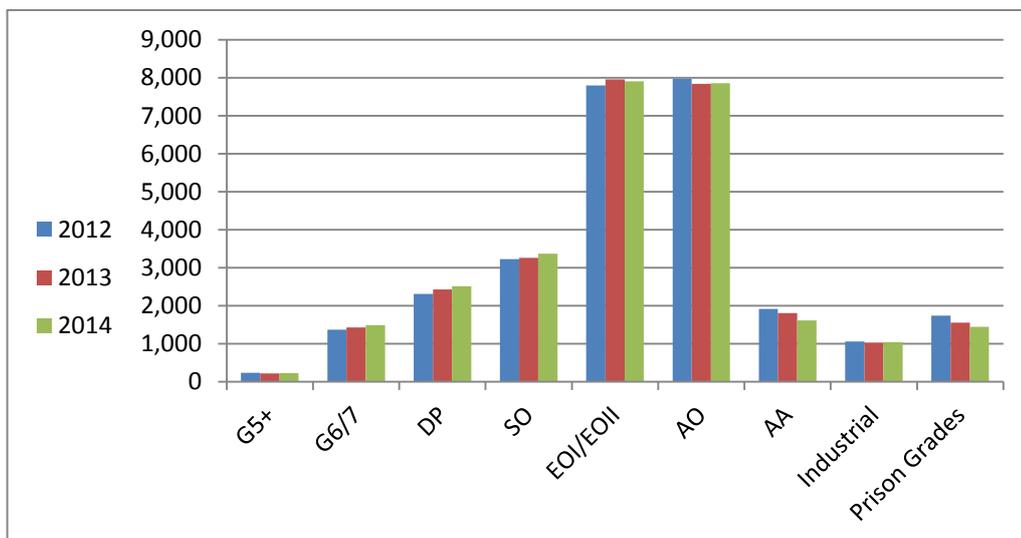
**Figure 1: Total NICS and PPS headcount**



Total headcount fell from 27,607 in 2012 to 27,448 in 2014, a reduction of 0.58%.

### 2.2. NICS and PPS headcount, by grade, 2012 to 2014

**Figure 2: NICS and PPS headcount, by grade**



<sup>3</sup> Headcount data at 1 Jan each year. Source NISRA: [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Employment\\_in\\_the\\_NICS.html](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Employment_in_the_NICS.html)

The following observations may be made about Figure 2:

- Headcount fell in consecutive years at Administrative Assistant and Prison Grades;
- Headcount rose in consecutive years at Grades 6/7, Deputy Principal and Staff Officer Grades;
- Headcount fell in 2013, and rose in 2014 at Grades 5+, Administrative Officer and Industrial Grades; and,
- Headcount rose in 2013, and fell in 2014 at Executive Officer I and II Grades.

Table 1 shows the same data as Figure 2. It also shows the percentage change from 2012 to 2014.

**Table 1: total NICS and PPS headcount by grade.**

	G5+	G6/7	DP	SO	EOI/EOII	AO	AA	Industrial	Prison Grades
<b>2012</b>	238	1,366	2,308	3,225	7,795	7,967	1,914	1,057	1,737
<b>2013</b>	218	1,425	2,423	3,256	7,951	7,837	1,801	1,023	1,549
<b>2014</b>	227	1,486	2,508	3,371	7,907	7,857	1,612	1,038	1,442
<b>% change 2012 to 2014</b>	-4.62%	8.78%	8.67%	4.53%	1.44%	-1.38%	-15.78%	-1.80%	-16.98%

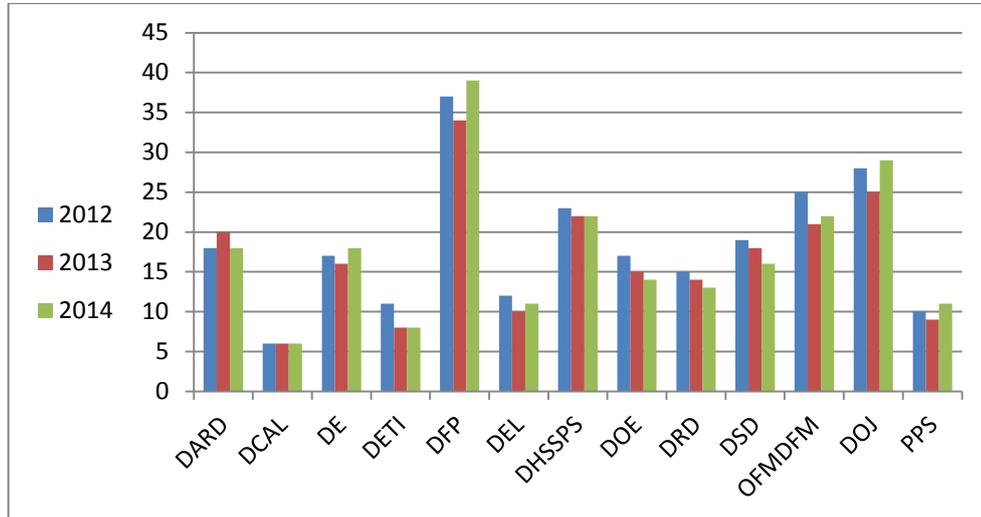
The following observations can be made about Table 1:

- The greatest percentage decrease in headcount was at Prison Grades (16.98%);
- The second greatest percentage decrease in headcount was at Administrative Assistant Grade (15.78%);
- The greatest percentage increase in headcount was at Grades 6/7 (8.78%); and,
- The second greatest percentage increase in headcount was at Deputy Principal (8.67%).

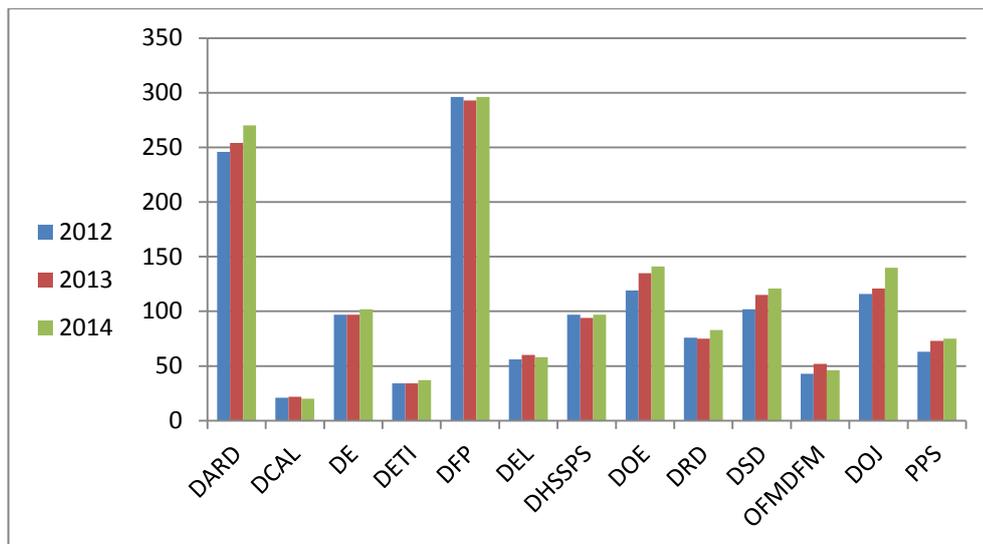
### 2.3. Headcount disaggregated by grade and department

Figures 3 to 11 show the headcount data for each grade, and department.

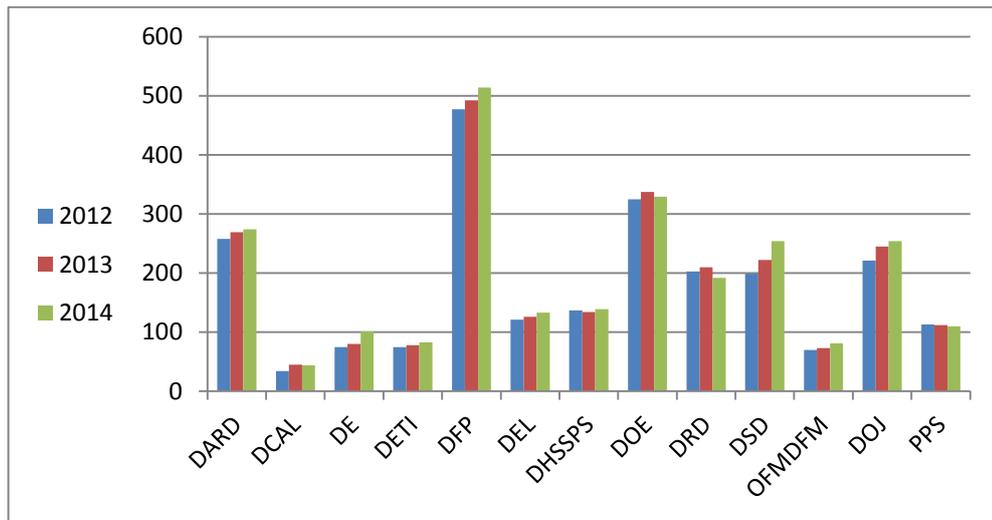
**Figure 3: Headcount at Grade 5 and above**



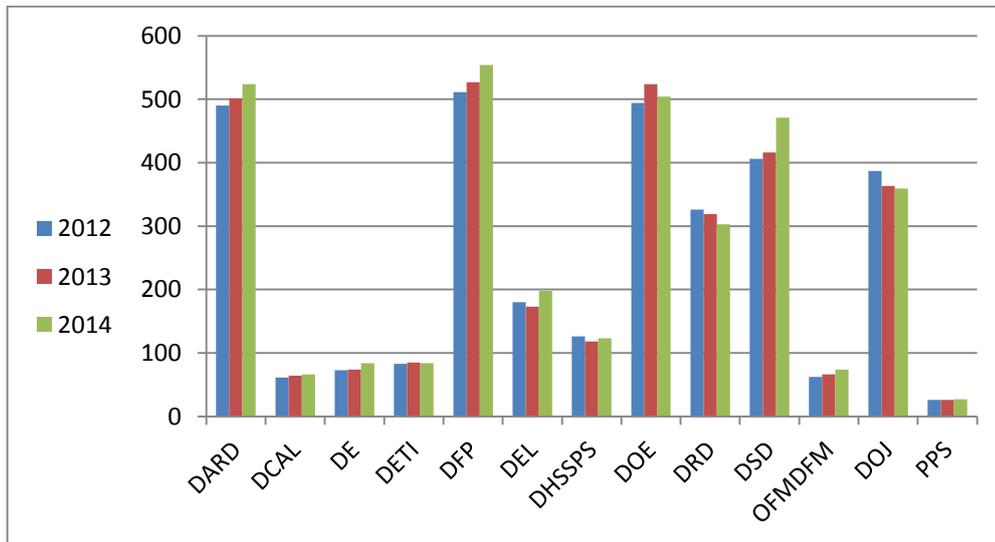
**Figure 4: Headcount at Grades 6/7 (Senior Principal/Principal)**



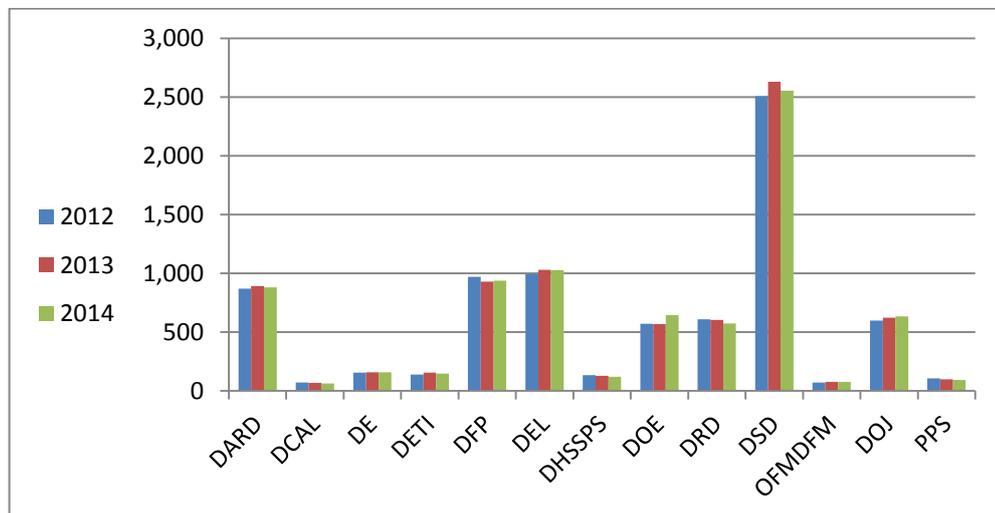
**Figure 5: Headcount at Deputy Principal**



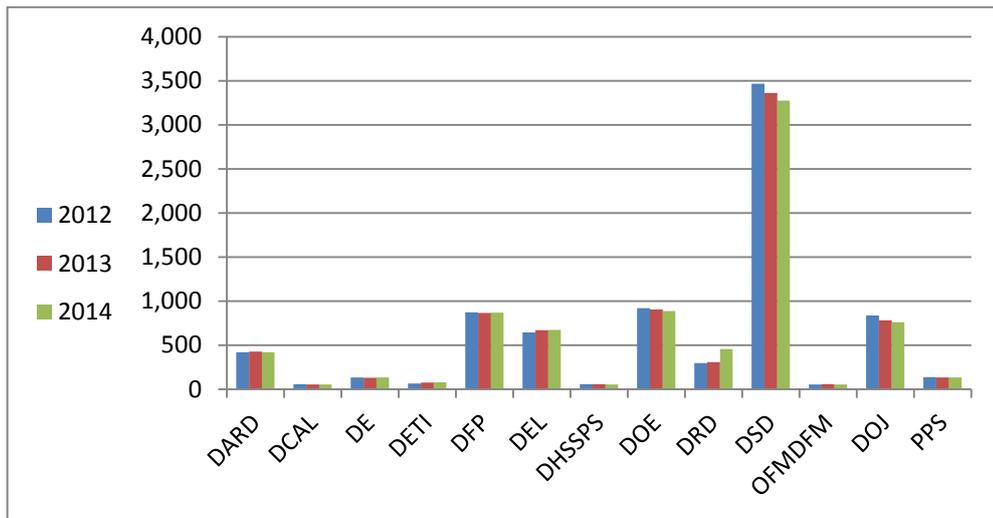
**Figure 6: Headcount at Staff Officer**



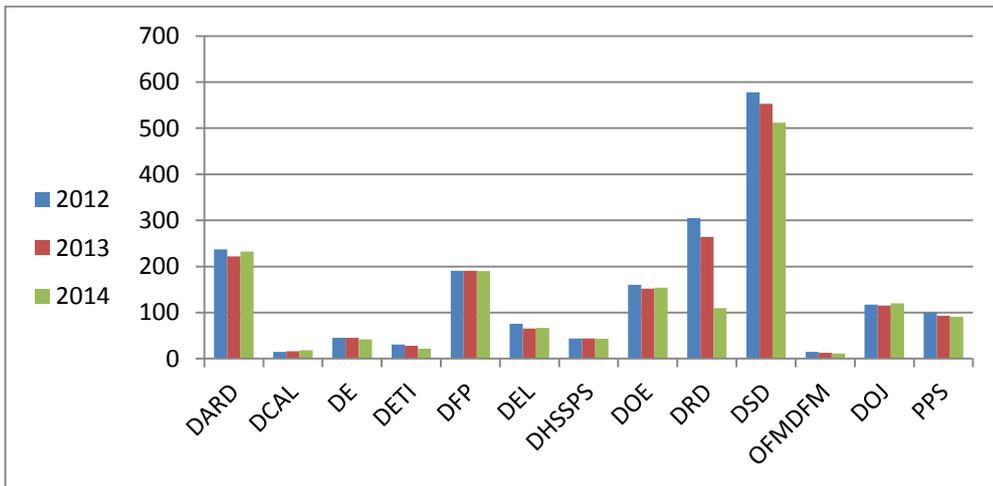
**Figure 7: Headcount at Executive Officer I and II**



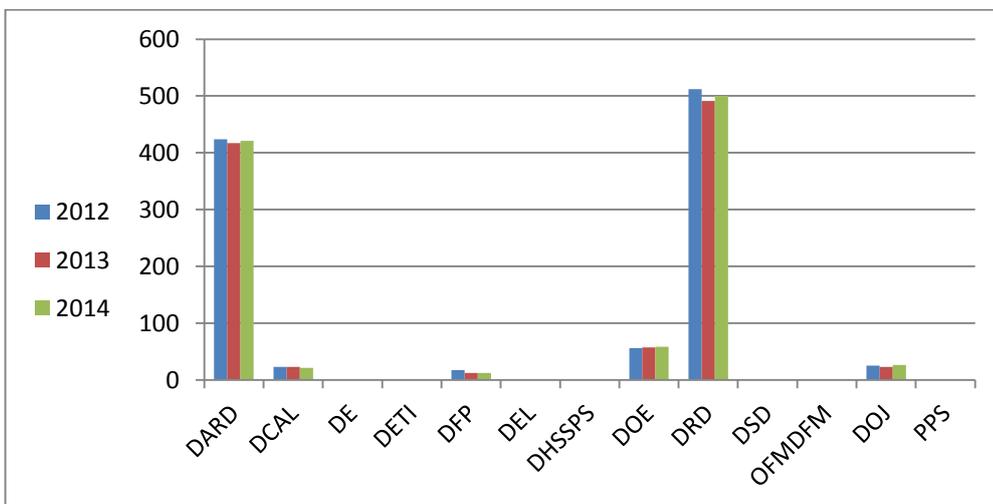
**Figure 8: Headcount at Administrative Officer**

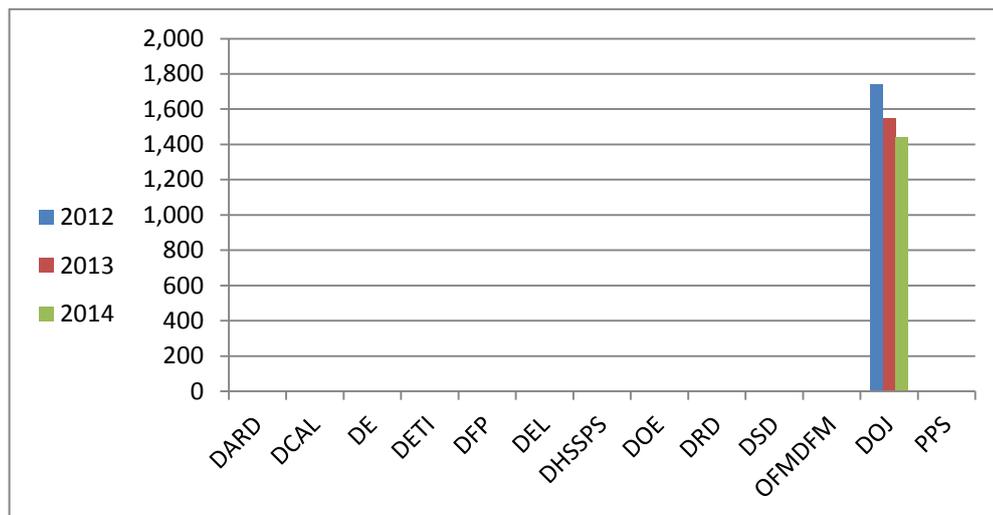


**Figure 9: Headcount at Administrative Assistant**



**Figure 10: Headcount at Industrial Grades**



**Figure 11: Headcount at Prison Grades**

The following observations may be made about Figures 3 to 11:

- DE, DFP, DoJ and PPS had a higher headcount at Grade 5+ in 2014, when compared to 2012 and 2013, with 2013 having the lowest count in the three-year period;
- DoE, DRD, DSD reduced headcount at Grade 5+ in each consecutive year;
- Only DCAL's headcount at Grade 5+ remained constant;
- DARD, DoE, DSD, DoJ and PPS increased headcount at Grades 6/7 in each consecutive year;
- Only DCAL had fewer staff at Grades 6/7 in 2014 than in 2012, with 2013 having the highest count in the three-year period;
- DARD, DE, DETI, DFP, DEL, DSD, DoJ, and OFMDFM increased headcount at Deputy Principal (DP) in consecutive years;
- DRD and PPS had fewer DPs in 2014 than 2012; PPS' decline was gradual year on year;
- DARD, DCAL, DE, DFP, DSD and OFMDFM increased headcount at Staff Officer (SO) in consecutive years;
- DHSSPS, DRD and DoJ had fewer SOs in 2014 than in 2012;
- DETI, DEL and DRD increased headcount at Administrative Officer in consecutive years;
- DoE, DSD and DoJ experienced reduced headcounts at AO in consecutive years;
- DETI, DRD, DSD, OFMDFM and PPS experienced reduced headcounts at Administrative Assistant in consecutive years;
- DARD, DCAL, DFP and DRD experienced slight fluctuations in headcount at Industrial Grade (IG), resulting in a decrease from 2012 to 2014;
- DOE and DoJ experienced a slightly increased headcount at IG in consecutive years; and,

- DoJ had a declining headcount at Prison Grades in consecutive years.

### 3. Concluding remarks

Despite the apparent tightening of the public expenditure climate, and the pressure on departmental budgets that would be expected, there has been only a small reduction in headcount in the NICS and PPS from 2012 of just over half of one percent.

In 2014, there were 11 fewer senior civil servants than in 2012, though this was an increase on the 2013 figure.

Headcount at all the middle management grades of G6/7, DP and SO increased by between 4.5 and 9%. Headcount at EOI/II increased marginally.

Headcount decreased marginally at the lower grades of AO and Industrial.

Headcount reduced significantly at AA and Prison Grades.