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Your reference: 2021:490
Our reference: GM-0986-2021
Date: 07 December 2021

Dear Peter,

NICS Reform

Thank you for your letter of the 26 November 2021 in which you seek further information on a number of topics following the oral briefing HOCS gave the Committee for Finance on 24 November. I will answer each of these in turn below.

An indication of which departments are not compliant with the whistleblowing legislation, as indicated in the recent GIAFIS report.

- The GIAFIS report 'Whistleblowing Across the NICS' was finalised in September 2019. At that time, there were three departments in which significant weaknesses were identified - Department of Finance, Department of Health and Department of Justice. The weaknesses related to the content of the departments' whistleblowing policies and the procedures in place to manage the whistleblowing process.
- Since the report was issued, each department has reviewed its policies and procedures to address the specific issues highlighted. A number of the recommendations will be addressed through the introduction of an NICS wide 'Raising Concerns Policy' which is currently being developed.

Information on NI Civil Service's intended changes to inward secondment arrangements and confirmation that relevant incoming secondees would always be subject to the NI Civil Service code of conduct etc.

- Under the current NICS Secondments Policy, a Civil Service employee who avails of an outward secondment, will remain a Civil Servant and retain NICS terms and conditions of service. The Civil Service will continue to be responsible for payment of salary and allowances, which will normally be recouped from the host organisation.

- Similarly, where an individual comes into the Civil Service by way of inward secondment, they retain their employer's terms and conditions and remain an employee of their employer, who also retains responsibility for payroll and other matters.
- The NICS Secondment policy is currently being reviewed to make express provision that during the secondment, any secondee (both inward and outward) will be subject to certain rules governing civil servants as required by the NICS Standards of Conduct. This will include provision that the rules in relation to the acceptance of outside business appointments will apply to both inward and outward secondees and consequently may place restrictions on the work that they are able to carry out after the secondment period comes to an end.
- The review policy is currently being finalised and will be presented to the Finance Minister for approval before consulting with Central Trade Union Side.

Information on NI Civil Service staffing levels compared with other UK jurisdictions, including the levels of staff turnover, the numbers of agency staff and how the NI Civil Service staffing numbers have changed by grade since the previous Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Key Trends in staff headcount

- The NICS headcount has increased by 1% between July 2016 (post-VES) and October 2021. Between July 2016 and July 2021 (most recently published data) the headcount of other jurisdictions have also increased (Scottish Government: 34.5%; GB Civil Service: 19.8%; Wales: 7%).
- The male / female ratio has remained relatively consistent over the years in all jurisdictions.

Table 1: Headcount of NI Civil Service and other UK Jurisdictions, 2016 & 2021

***All figures are reported at 1st July with exception of NICS 2021 figures which are at 1st October**

Organisation	2016			2021			Headcount Variance
	Total Headcount	Male	Female	Total Headcount	Male	Female	
NICS	23,578	50%	50%	23,825	50%	50%	1%
GB Civil Service (GB)	415,730	46%	54%	497,910	46%	54%	20%
Scottish Government	16,850	52%	48%	22,670	48%	52%	35%
Welsh Government	5,420	41%	59%	5,800	41%	59%	7%

Data Source: NISRA: Employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service quarterly Official Statistics

- Table 2 provides details of leavers and joiners rates for NICS. Between 2016/17 and 2018/19, more staff left the NICS than joined. In 2019/20 and 2020-21, more staff joined the NICS than left. This shift is due to lift in the moratorium on recruitment and the large scale open recruitment competitions at general service grades that launched in 2018 and continue to date.

Table 2 Leavers and Joiners Rates: 2016/17 to 2019/20

	Leavers		Joiners	
	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
2020/21	634	2.8%	945	4.0%
2019/20	831	3.6%	880	3.8%
2018/19	812	3.5%	517	2.2%
2017/18	702	3.0%	588	2.5%
2016/17	801	3.4%	457	1.9%

Data Source: Leavers: NISRA Personnel Statistics 2021 Publication
Joiners: HR Connect

- Agency workers can be hired for a variety of business reasons, such as covering maternity leave, short term increases in workload and special exercises. Table 3 shows there has been a significant increase in the number of recruitment agency workers since April 2017 (date data was first recorded). The majority of recruitment agency workers are undertaking general service AO roles. These numbers should reduce given the ongoing large scale general service competition to fill AO vacancies across the NICS. Decisions as to whether and how vacancies are filled, and any associated financial costs, fall to individual departments.

Table 3: Recruitment Agency Workers on assignment to the NICS

Recruitment Agency Worker	1 st April 2017	1 st October 2021	Variance	
			Headcount	%
NICS Total (Headcount)	1,068	2,632	1,564	146

Source: NICS HR

Figures exclude any recruitment agency workers that Departments may have engaged directly

- Table 4 provides details of the NICS headcount by analogous grade. As at 1 October 2021, 33% of the NICS employees are working at SO grade or above, compared to 28% in July 2016 (post VES). As at 1 October 2021, 58.2% are working at grades EO1 to AA, compared to 63.2% in July 2016 (post VES). The

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percentage of the workforce in both industrial and prison grades has not changed materially over this same period.

Table 4: NI Civil Service Headcount by Grade at 1st July 2016 & 1st October 2021

Grade	1st July 2016		1st October 2021	
	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
G5+	208	0.9%	254	1.1%
G6/7	1,284	5.4%	1,644	6.9%
DP	2,163	9.2%	2,811	11.8%
SO	2,944	12.5%	3,158	13.3%
EOI/EOII	6,792	28.8%	7,178	30.1%
AO	6,934	29.4%	6,180	25.9%
AA	1,170	5.0%	513	2.2%
Industrial	856	3.6%	796	3.3%
Prison Grades	1,227	5.2%	1,291	5.4%
Total	23,578	100.0%	23,825	100.0%

Data Source: NISRA: Employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service quarterly Official Statistics

Information on the levels of out-sourcing of HR functions by the NI Civil Service as compared to other UK jurisdictions

- The HR functions currently outsourced by the Civil Service are payroll and transactional HR services, including elements of recruitment, and employee relations matters (i.e. grievance; discipline; dignity at work; and absence) and other personnel records.
- The Integr8 Programme within DoF is leading on the development of an integrated operating model for Finance and HR which will include exploring the options for the outsourcing and insourcing of services.
- That work will include comparisons against models of best practice and benchmarks in relation to similar services in other jurisdictions.

Clarification on the alternative project/programme governance models which are to be adopted in preference to Prince2 and applied to the management of the programme of NI Civil Service reform.

- For programme management, the recommended standard for the Northern Ireland public sector is Managing Successful Programmes (MSP®).
- The PRINCE2® methodology should be used for project management generally.

- The Association for Project Management (APM) is the Chartered body for project management and offers an opportunity to become a Chartered Project Professional (ChPP). SROs as well as programme and project managers should be aware of the work and advice given by APM in its Body of Knowledge.

I hope this addresses your queries.

Yours sincerely

Andy Monaghan

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DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLY LIAISON OFFICER