

Written Ministerial Statement

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The Executive Office

OUTCOME OF THE RECENT COMPETITION TO APPOINT A NEW HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE (HOCS)

Published on Saturday 26 September 2020.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The position of Head of the NI Civil Service (NICS) is a critical role and one of significant responsibility, including leading almost 23,000 civil servants to serve the institutions of government and all our citizens through the provision of excellent public services.

The Head of Civil Service (HOCS) is also the most senior official in the organisation, and is the principal policy adviser to the First Minister and deputy First Minister across all the issues of government. HOCS also heads up the Executive Office.

The challenges cannot be underestimated given our current unprecedented context of continuing to manage the response to and recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic, preparations for EU exit and delivering commitments set out in NDNA.

The previous post holder, David Sterling, announced his intention to retire in December 2019 after more than three years in the post. Planning for the HOCS recruitment exercise was underway in January, with the intention that a replacement would be appointed by the time David retired at the end of August.

While some inevitable delays to this process were experienced due to the covid-19 pandemic, the agreed process of joint FM and dFM final stage interviews took place last week.

Regrettably, an appointment was not made.

We are therefore, now urgently working to put in place appropriate interim arrangements and in parallel considering how best to fill this crucial role on a substantive basis.

THE RT HON ARLENE FOSTER MLA
FIRST MINISTER

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER