



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Candidate Information Pack

Personal Secretary

February 2025

1. Foreword from the Chief Executive

Thank you for showing an interest in joining our team as a Personal Secretary.

The Commission is focused on protecting and promoting the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland, by providing high quality independent advice to government, the use of investigatory powers and supporting legal challenges. Our education work helps increase levels of compliance and improves service provision across the public and private sectors. At the same time, we engage with communities to empower individuals to understand and be able to fully exercise their human rights.

By joining our highly motivated, professional and successful multi-disciplinary team, you will have the opportunity to use your skills in an organisation that is an internationally recognised centre of excellence.

We want to add a talented individual to the Commission's staff who is equally effective working alone or as a good team player, committed to quality and continuous improvement for yourself and others. The Commission can provide you with excellent personal and professional development opportunities. We are seeking someone who is flexible and can utilise their talents to support the work taking place across a range of our organisation's functions.

If you are interested in working in an organisation with a broad mandate, working in a challenging environment, and playing an important part in delivering a better Northern Ireland for all, then I look forward to hearing from you.



Dr David Russell
Chief Executive

2. Role and Functions of the NI Human Rights Commission

The Commission was established as a result of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. Our governing legislation is the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as amended by the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 and the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. It is a National Human Rights Institution with A status accreditation from the United Nations. This recognition means that the organisation operates independently in full accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 48/134 (the Paris Principles).

The Commission is also a non-departmental public body and receives grant-in-aid from the United Kingdom government through the Northern Ireland Office. We report to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Our primary role is to make sure government and public authorities protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. We also help people understand what their human rights are and what they can do if their rights are violated or abused. To pursue this objective, we consider the full range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Our work is based on the international human rights treaties ratified by the United Kingdom government, domestic legislation and relevant soft law standards.

The statutory functions of the Commission in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are:

1. Keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness in Northern Ireland of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights.
2. Advising the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Executive of legislative and other measures which ought to be taken to protect human rights as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for advice; and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.
3. Advising the Northern Ireland Assembly whether legislative Bills are compatible with human rights.
4. Providing advice to the UK government and Westminster Parliament on matters affecting human rights in NI.
5. Conducting investigations on systemic human rights issues. To do so, we may enter places of detention, and can compel individuals and agencies to give oral testimony or to produce documents.

6. Promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland. To do so, we may undertake or support research and educational activities.
7. Providing legal assistance to individuals and initiating strategic cases, including own motion legal challenges.
8. Monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties and reporting to the United Nations and Council of Europe.
9. Working in partnership with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission as mandated through the joint committee created in accordance with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The Commission is mandated in accordance with Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework (formerly the Ireland/Ni Protocol) to the European Union Withdrawal Agreement to ensure there is no diminution of rights protected in the 'Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity' chapter of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement as a result of United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

The Commission's statutory functions for this purpose in accordance with the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 are:

1. Monitoring the implementation of Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework to the EU withdrawal agreement (rights of individuals).
2. Reporting to the Secretary of State and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland on the implementation of Article 2(1) as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for such a report, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks.
3. Advising the Secretary of State and the Executive Committee of the Assembly of legislative and other measures which ought to be taken to implement Article 2(1) as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for advice, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.
4. Advising the Assembly (or a committee of the Assembly) whether a Bill is compatible with Article 2(1) as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a request for advice, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.

5. Promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of Article 2(1); and for this purpose we may undertake, commission or provide financial or other assistance for research, and educational activities.
6. Bring any appropriate matters of relevance to Article 2(1) to the attention of the Specialised Committee on issues related to the implementation of the Windsor Framework established by Article 165 of the Withdrawal Agreement.
7. Bring judicial review proceedings in respect of an alleged breach (or potential future breach) of Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework to the EU withdrawal agreement; or intervene in legal proceedings, whether for judicial review or otherwise, in so far as they relate to an alleged breach (or potential future breach) of Article 2(1).

The Commission is also designated, with the Equality Commission, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons as the independent mechanism tasked with promoting, protecting and monitoring implementation of Convention in Northern Ireland.

We also engage with other National Human Rights Institutions in the United Kingdom on issues of common interest.

Our Annual Statement, published in December each year, records how much progress has been made towards meeting human rights obligations in Northern Ireland. This strongly informs our future work priorities.

3. Current Organisational Structure and Future Plans

There are seven Commissioners (a full time Chief Commissioner and six part-time Commissioners) appointed by the Secretary of State. As far as practicable, the Commissioners, as a group, is representative of the community in Northern Ireland.

The Commissioners are supported by a small staff team. The senior management team consist of the Chief Executive and five Directors working across five functions:

- Legal;
- Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government;
- Human Rights after EU withdrawal;
- Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs;
- Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs.

4. Our Values and What It's Like to Work for Us

A human rights-based approach underpins the Commission's work. This is predicated on the conviction that human rights compliant outcomes require processes that adhere to both the values, which underpin human rights laws as well as their substantive content. On this basis our core principles are:

Participation

People should be involved in decisions affecting their human rights.

Accountability

There should be effective monitoring of how human rights are implemented and meaningful remedies available when things go wrong.

Non-discrimination and equality

All forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. People facing the biggest barriers to realising their rights should be prioritised.

Empowerment

Everyone should understand and be able to fully exercise their human rights.

Legality

Policies and services should be grounded in enforceable domestic and international human rights laws.

Partnership

In developing a culture of human rights, the Commission will work with other organisations across a wide spectrum of society.

5. Overall Purpose of the Role

The post holder will provide an efficient, effective and responsive secretarial support service primarily to the Chief Commissioner to ensure that their time is managed and utilised in the most effective manner. This requires proactive planning and managing of tasks within a constantly changing environment, the utilisation of well-developed interpersonal skills and adapting when necessary to changing roles and working patterns.

The Personal Secretary will also ensure that appropriate cover arrangements are in place in times of absence so that a satisfactory level of service is maintained.

6. Duties and Responsibilities

1. Diary Management

- Accurately organising and monitoring the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive's diary on a daily basis. Meeting with the Chief Commissioner regularly to discuss, prioritise and action diary commitments, cancellations and rescheduling appointments.
- Liaising with attendees to determine times, durations and venues for meetings. Booking rooms and venues and arranging for or providing hospitality as necessary. Copying and collating papers and ensuring that the required briefing and equipment is available. Making the necessary security arrangements and meeting, greeting and escorting visitors. Where necessary, make arrangements for meetings online.
- Making cost-effective travel and accommodation arrangements.

2. Information Management

- Answering and vetting incoming telephone calls based on knowledge of caller or issue(s) raised. Whenever possible, responding to callers directly by providing information or redirecting to the appropriate Director/Team. Taking messages and obtaining contact numbers.
- Proactively manage emails, correspondence, papers, etc on arrival and identifying those requiring urgent action, highlighting deadlines and action points, attaching related papers and passing to the Chief Commissioner and/or Chief Executive for action. Where appropriate, redirecting to a Director for action. Keeping the Chief Commissioner and/or Chief

Executive informed of actions. Bringing important target dates and issues to the Chief Commissioner and/or Chief Executive's attention on an ongoing basis.

- Logging the various information types received and issued into electronic postbook(s), tracking responses through BF systems and chasing up outstanding responses to ensure deadlines are met.
- Typing, compiling and issuing emails, letters, acknowledgements, minutes, tables, presentations, charts, slides and reports. Signing and circulating documents on behalf of the Chief Commissioner and/or Chief Executive. Typing and formatting documents from audio tapes (if applicable) and manuscripts.
- Co-ordinating inputs and drafting co-ordinated responses.
- Scanning, reformatting and updating documents, standardising layouts and creating templates and databases. Keeping knowledge and skills in this area up-to-date.
- Managing all emails, documents, correspondence, papers and files, in electronic filing systems – copying, cataloguing, filing, retrieving, archiving, reviewing and deleting/destroying in accordance with guidelines or protocol. Opening and maintaining registered files.
- Researching information sources such as the internet, Hansard or press articles for items such as publications, records, press releases, contact details and travel information.

3. Communication

- Establish a close working relationship with the Chief Commissioner, Chief Executive, Directors, their teams and colleagues in Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs and communicate effectively in order to meet targets and deadlines.

4. Miscellaneous

- Maintaining expenditure records, for example in relation to travel, hospitality, stationery, training and mobile phones and processing credit card payments. Preparing expense claims on behalf of the Chief Commissioner.

- Monitoring the level of stationery supplies and office consumables and reordering as required.
- Secretariat of meetings including recording, producing and issuing minutes.
- Collating, recording and issuing various registers and returns. Proof reading and other tasks as delegated by the Chief Commissioner, Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs).
- Undertaking training and personal development activity as agreed with the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs).
- Displaying a commitment to the protection of human rights and to the promotion of equality and showing sensitivity to the diversity of views on human rights issues in Northern Ireland.
- Undertaking any other duties whenever reasonably required by the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs), other Directors, Chief Executive or Chief Commissioner.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list and the duties associated with the post may be subject to reasonable change from time to time according to the needs of the organisation.

7. Employee Specification

Essential Shortlisting Criteria

Applicants **must** demonstrate as at the closing date for receipt of applications that they possess:

1. Level 2 Diploma or equivalent in Secretarial Administration* **or** BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate or equivalent in Business Administration* **and** at least 1 year's secretarial experience**

OR

At least 3 years secretarial experience**

2. Able to demonstrate at least 1 years' experience of providing support to senior management.

*Relevant or equivalent qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc so that a well-informed decision can be made.

**Secretarial experience is defined as experience with office duties to include diary and mailbox management, dealing with enquiries, word processing, planning and prioritising work, co-ordinating and drafting responses and secretariat support to meetings.

Desirable Shortlisting Criteria

In addition to the above essential criteria, NIHRC reserves the right to shortlist only those applicants who, as at the closing date for receipt of applications, can demonstrate they have the following additional desirable criteria:

1. Ability to demonstrate an interest and commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights.

NIHRC reserves the right to enhance the criteria as it sees fit in the event of a large volume of applications.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme and Adjustment Requirements

As part of our commitment to the employment of disabled people, we operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The GIS does not guarantee a job.

However, its objective is to ensure disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. If you wish to apply under the GIS, please contact HeadsTogether Consulting Ltd on 02890 424030 or via email: recruit@headstogether.com

If an assessment or test is used as a shortlisting tool, then applicants applying under GIS will not be required to complete the assessment or test and will be offered a guaranteed interview, provided that they demonstrate in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the role.

In instances where an assessment or test forms part of the selection process and is not a shortlisting tool, then all applicants must meet the minimum standard required for that assessment or test, including those applying under GIS. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for any assessment or test if required.

If you do not wish to apply under the GIS but do require us to make reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process, you should also please contact HeadsTogether Consulting Ltd on 02890 424030 or via email: recruit@headstogether.com. We will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments for any stage of this recruitment process. Details of any disability are only used for these purposes and do not form any part of the selection process.

8. Application Process

To apply, candidates are required to submit and up-to-date and relevant Curriculum Vitae (CV) detailing career history, and relevant qualifications. Candidates are also required to submit the completed covering letter template to clearly detail how they meet the criteria outlined in the candidate specification. Candidates are also asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Applicants are required to return the following items to recruit@headstogether.com by no later than 4pm on Friday 21 February 2025. Applicants should ensure they have returned:

- **Completed Application Form**
- **Cover letter setting out how the candidate meets the essential and desirable criteria**
- **Completed Equal Opportunities Statement**
- **Signed Privacy Notice**

If you have any questions about the role, please direct these via email to our HR providers HeadsTogether Consulting Ltd using the email address recruit@headstogether.com or alternatively telephone 02890 424030.

Please note it is up to the candidate to demonstrate clearly how they meet each of the criteria. The shortlisting panel cannot make presumptions about information that is not listed directly or that is ambiguous. The shortlisting panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained. If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the shortlisting panel will reject your application.

Applications received after the deadline unfortunately cannot be considered. It is the candidate's sole responsibility to ensure that applications are received by the closing date and time provided.

9. Recruitment Process

The recruitment process will include a competency-based interview.

Interviews for those shortlisted is envisaged to take place on Thursday 20 March and Friday 21 March 2025.

In addition to the criteria indicated above, the selection process is designed to test the following skills and attributes:

- Seeing the Big Picture
- Changing and Improving
- Effective Decision Making
- Leading and Communicating
- Collaborating and Partnering
- Building Capability for All
- Delivering Value for Money
- Making a Quality Service
- Delivering at Pace
- Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners

Seeing the Big Picture

- Ability to keep up to date with a broad set of issues relating to the work of the Commission.
- Develops an understanding of how their own and finance, personnel and corporate services supports the achievement of the Commission priorities and delivery to the service user.
- Focuses on the overall goal and intent of what they are trying to achieve, not just the task.

- Takes an active interest in expanding their knowledge of areas related to their own role.

Changing and Improving

- Understands and applies technology to achieve efficient and effective business and personal results.
- Considers and suggests ideas for improvements, sharing this feedback with others in a constructive manner.
- Conducts regular reviews of what and who is required to make a project/activity successful and make ongoing improvements.
- Puts aside preconceptions and consider new ideas on their own merits.
- Helps colleagues, clients and corporate partners to understand changes and why they have been introduced.
- Identifies, resolves or escalates the positive and negative effects that change may have on their own role/team.

Effective Decision Making

- Demonstrates accountability and makes unbiased decisions.
- Examines complex information and obtains further information to make accurate decisions.
- Speaks with the relevant people in order to obtain the most accurate information and get advice when unsure of how to proceed.
- Explains clearly, verbally and in writing, how a decision has been reached.
- Provides advice and feedback to support others to make accurate decisions.
- Monitors the storage of critical data and service user information to support decision making and conducts regular reviews to ensure it is stored accurately, confidentially and responsibly.

Leading and Communicating

- Displays enthusiasm around goals and activities – adopting a positive approach when interacting with others.
- Listens to, understands, respects and accepts the value of different views, ideas and ways of working.
- Express ideas effectively, both orally and in writing, and with sensitivity and respect for others.
- Ability to confidently handle challenging conversations or interviews.
- Confronts and deal promptly with inappropriate language or behaviours, including bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Collaborating and Partnering

- Demonstrates interest in others and develops a range of contacts outside own team to help get the job done.

- Ability to change ways of working to facilitate collaboration for the benefit of the team's work.
- Proactively seeks information, resources and support from others outside own immediate team in order to help achieve results.
- Readily identifies opportunities to share knowledge, information and learning and make progress by working with colleagues.
- Listens attentively to others and checks their understanding by asking questions.
- Takes responsibility for creating a working environment that encourages equality, diversity and inclusion.

Building Capability for All

- Takes ownership of team and individual development by identifying capability needs and consistently achieving development objectives.
- Takes responsibility for the quality of own work and seek opportunities for improvement through continuous learning.
- Proactively supports the development plans of others.
- Takes account of the diverse contributions of team members and delegates work to improve capabilities of all.
- Encourages and is open to developmental feedback from others.

Delivering Value for Money

- Manages information and financial data so that it is accurate, easily located and reusable.
- Can account for expenditure and create well supported arguments for extra expenditure e.g. overtime.
- Takes opportunities to challenge misuse of resources in order to achieve value for money and sustainable ways of working.
- Understands that all actions have a cost and chooses the most effective way to do something in a resource efficient way.
- Ensures that recognised control procedures and practices are maintained.
- Monitors resources against plans and budget, identifying and flagging up variances.

Managing a Quality Service

- Explains clearly to clients what can be done.
- Works with their team to set priorities, create clear plans and manage all work to meet the needs of the Commission.
- Ensures that levels of service are maintained – flags up risks or concerns in order to meet service users' requirements.
- Keeps internal teams, service users and stakeholders fully informed of plans and possibilities.
- Promotes adherence to relevant policies, procedures, regulations and legislation, including equality, diversity and health and safety.

- Identifies common problems or weaknesses in policy or procedures that affects performance and escalates these.

Delivering at Pace

- Creates regular reviews of what and who is required to make a project/activity successful and make ongoing improvements.
- Is interested and positive about what they and the team are trying to achieve.
- Takes ownership of problems in their own area of responsibility.
- Remains positive and focused on achieving outcomes despite setbacks.
- Checks their own and team performance against outcomes, makes improvement suggestions or takes corrective action when problems are identified.
- Sets and achieves challenging goals and monitors quality.

Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners

- Ability to identify and access staff with responsibility for procurement and appropriate expertise.
- Understands and has the ability to explain the Commission's approach to assigning contractual and financial delegations.
- Recognises when deliverables and/or services derived from a business arrangement are not being delivered to the required level of quality or standard and takes appropriate action.
- Fully meets commercial confidentiality and data security requirements in contracts.

Transgender Requirements

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact Joanne Kane of HeadsTogether Consulting Ltd on 02890 424030. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

10. Terms and Conditions of Employment

Duration of Contract

This is a permanent, full-time post.

Start Date

The person appointed will be expected to take up duty as soon as is practicable.

Eligibility to work within the UK

Job offers will be subject to appointed candidates successfully supplying proof of eligibility to work in the UK.

If you do not already have the legal right to work in the UK, you are still welcome to apply for a job with the Commission. We strongly recommend that you use the [Home Office website](#) to review the legal requirements of working in the UK as this will give you an indication of whether you may be eligible to work in the UK.

We will assess all job applications using criteria as outlined in the Employee Specification. It is a condition of any offer of employment we make to you that you have, or gain, permission to work in the UK. By law, you will not be able to start working with the Commission until you are able to provide evidence that this permission has been granted.

The Commission will consider Sponsorship where applicable. Please note a Certificate of Sponsorship may not be guaranteed as it will be subject to criteria and requirements as set out by the Home Office.

Working Hours

The normal office hours are from 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, however there may be the requirement to work outside of these normal hours. The job requires a considerable degree of commitment, flexibility and adaptability on the part of the post holder to meet quality standards and working deadlines. He/she/they will maintain at all times such availability, flexibility and mobility as is necessary to the pursuance of the job.

The Commission operates a hybrid working model and flexible working hours arrangements.

The post is suitable for job-share.

Probation

Satisfactory completion of a twelve-month probation period is a condition of continued employment in the position.

Salary

The grade of the post is currently equivalent to Northern Ireland Civil Service Grade Executive Officer 2, with a current pay band of £27,897-£29,622 per year (under review).

Salary will be within the above range within which pay progression will be as per NICS pay policy. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the starting salary will be at the pay band minimum (i.e. £27,897 per year).

Allowances

Travelling and subsistence expenses will be paid at approved NICS rates to the holder of this post when she/he/they are absent from the Commission's premises on Commission business.

Notice

The appointment may be terminated by either party with at least one month's notice in writing.

Holidays

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, currently 12 per annum, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days (April to March) rising to 30 days on five years' continuous service.

Location

We are located at:

Fourth Floor
Alfred House
19 – 21 Alfred Street
Belfast
BT2 8ED

Pensions

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission operates the Civil Services Pension Scheme. Further details of the pension can be found on the Civil Services Pension website at <http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/>

Policies

The Commission recognises the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) for the purposes of collective bargaining. It is intended that so far as is reasonably practicable the Commission will seek to mirror the policies and procedures adopted and amended from time to time by the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

Employees should refer to the NICS policies and procedures at <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-civil-service-handbook>