From: Catherine Shannon

Date: 15 December 2022

To: Grade 3s

Vacancy Reset/ NICS RESOURCING PRINCIPLES

Background

1. In light of the current financial situation, the evidence of changing resource requirements, and the current affordability position, Neil Gibson, Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance, will be proposing at NICS Board December 2022 an immediate vacancy caseload re-set, similar to what was done in November 2020. To support Departments, NICS HR are issuing by close of play 16 December a full list of all current vacancies and vacancy management activity to enable Departments to take forward the reset exercise, should this be agreed at NICS Board. You will also be aware, that some initial steps have already been taken on the vacancy reset work with recent decisions to defer large scale recruitment at G6/G7 & AO. Departments are being asked to prioritise those vacancies that remain affordable in order to allow NICSHR to take forward these priority vacancies in a focussed recruitment plan for the coming year. This will ensure Departments and NICSHR avoid wasted effort / spend in DoF on recruitment activity as well as continued risk of further increased employee headcount that would demonstrate a lack of control in terms of financial management and/or pay bill affordability.

2. In advance of the NICS Board meeting in January 2023 Chris Smart and I will meet with Departments to review prioritised lists, provide support and advice on the vacancy reset exercise (if agreed), and develop a proposed NICS recruitment plan to be confirmed with NICS Board.

3. By way of reminder, the note of 30 August 2022 to Board colleagues on Recruitment, Selection and Vacancy Management set-out the Refreshed Resourcing Principles (copy below at table 1.1). NICS Board endorsed the principles, subject to the following addition - where there is a difference of opinion between NICSHR and the Department/s in which the vacancy exists the final decision, after consideration of all the facts and in accordance with employer legal and statutory obligations (including the Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual / Commissioners code, DDA and reasonable adjustments) as well as adherence to merit principle, will rest with the Departmental Accounting Officer/s. Where the vacancy is for a job role that exists across more than one department, collective agreement will be required.

Table 1.1 Refreshed Resourcing Principles

PRINCIPLE to be applied in Departments	**ENABLING ACTION by NICSHR**
Departments manage their own employee workplace adjustment requests, e.g. reasonable adjustments under disability legislation, welfare-related adjustments or alternative working pattern requests	Support Departments in relation to accommodating workplace adjustments for their employees
Departments seek to accommodate their own staff returning from career break, secondment or on-loan	Support Departments by proactively confirming ahead of time their staff who will soon need a suitable post on return from career break / secondment / on-loan
Departments ensure managed use of temporary resourcing solutions; such as temporary promotions, recruitment agency workers, inward secondment opportunities or staff substitution	Manage recruitment agency worker contract Support and facilitate use of Interchange scheme to advertise inward secondment opportunities
Before raising a vacancy requisition OR seeking a new recruitment competition, Departments should seek to optimise allocation of existing skills / staff resources to deliver business priorities	Support Departments with processes to facilitate internal moves
Departments requisition vacancies at point they are content to proceed to fill the post. Note: HRConnect iRec requisitions on basis of one per vacancy and all are accompanied with confirmation of affordability (through completion of a Funding & Headcount form)	Fill vacancies from all available supply, in accordance with employer legal and statutory obligations as well as adherence to merit principle (including use of current live merit lists)
Departments to confirm affordability for vacancies to be filled, which is the responsibility of the individual Departmental Accounting Officer/s	Support Departments with workforce planning data

4. Following the exercise required in paragraph 1 above, and where a Department has identified a need for additional resources and has either submitted a vacancy requisition to NICSHR or provided written confirmation of anticipated demand, NICSHR is responsible for ensuring that in filling a vacancy it considers all available supply, ensuring the NICS discharges statutory obligations as well as adherence to the merit principle.

5. In developing and delivering the NICS recruitment plans, NICSHR and the new People & Organisational Development team will work collaboratively to undertake the actions set out below.

    - Engage with the relevant head of profession/ senior departmental official to confirm level of current and anticipated demand to inform decision for new competitions;
    - Advise Departments and head of profession on recruitment competition design, including method to fill and selection criteria. Recruitment competitions should be designed to align with the PAC's view that the NICS should be 'opened up' and the ECNI's advice for public authorities to advertise widely so as many eligible and suitably qualified candidates as possible have the opportunity to apply;
    - Recruitment competitions should be NICS-wide rather than departmental-specific as far as possible (to optimise use of any resulting merit list and begin the journey towards standard NICS-wide job roles). Where there is a difference of opinion between HR and the Department/s in which the vacancy exists the final decision after consideration of all the facts and in accordance with employer legal and statutory obligations (including the Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual / Commissioners code, DDA and reasonable adjustments) will rest with the Departmental Accounting Officer/s;
    - Oversee development of competition design and proposed method to fill, ensuring method to fill proposals reflect consideration of workforce composition for relevant occupations – both grade to be recruited for and application pools, demonstrating NICS commitments to address Article 55, gender, disability and age profile of the workforce;
    - Co-ordinate trade union consultation;
    - The NICSHR recruitment operations team will develop a set of KPIs on recruitment timeframes, provide clarity on NICS-wide queue of recruitment competitions, and work with Departments and heads of profession to prioritise their requests. It is aimed to have the initial KPIs in place by Q4 2022/23.

6. NICSHR Business Partners are fully briefed and should be first point of contact. For queries on recruitment policy issues that are complex/novel/cross cutting contact Aisling Quinn People & Organisational Development at aisling.quinn@finance-ni.gov.uk and for operational delivery matters contact Chris Smart, NICSHR Resourcing Director at chris.smart@finance-ni.gov.uk .



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