

Request

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request the following information in relation to staffing levels within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

Please provide:

1. The total number of Northern Ireland Civil Service staff (headcount and FTE):
 - immediately prior to the 2015 Voluntary Exit Scheme; and
 - as of the most recent available date.Please provide this:
 - overall across the NICS; and
 - broken down by Department.
2. The total number of agency staff currently engaged across the NICS, broken down by Department.
3. The total cost of agency staff across the NICS for the most recent financial year available, broken down by Department.
4. The total cost of agency staff across the NICS in:
 - 2014/15; and
 - the most recent financial year available.
5. Copies of any analysis, reports or briefing papers held by the Department comparing:
 - staffing levels before and after the 2015 Voluntary Exit Scheme; and
 - the subsequent use and cost of agency staff.

DoF response

I can confirm the department holds some of the information requested.

1. The total number of Northern Ireland Civil Service staff (headcount and FTE), immediately prior to the 2015 Voluntary Exit Scheme, broken down by department are available in Table 1a and 2a of the Employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service - 1st July 2015 published on the [NISRA website](#). The most recent available data, as at 1 January 2026, can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The total number of Northern Ireland Civil Service staff (headcount and FTE) as at 1 January 2026, broken down by Department

Department	Headcount	Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
DAERA	3,574	3,370
DfC	7,883	7,276
DfE	1,218	1,121
DE	539	508
DoF	3,501	3,268
DoH	602	564
DfI	2,946	2,788
DoJ	3,400	3,248
TEO	444	420
PPS	445	413
Other	127	119
Total	24,679	23,095

Notes:

- Analysis is based on NICS data held on HR Connect and Compass data as at 1 January 2026.
- Excludes staff who were on a career break and those on secondment to another organisation.
- Other includes staff in the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland and the Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland.

2. According to the records we currently hold, the total number of agency workers on assignment within the NICS broken down by Department is shown in the table below:

Department	Headcount
DAERA	436
DE	30
DfC	3720
DfE	49
DfI	188
DoF	327
DoH	25
DoJ	293
PPS	79
TEO	39
Total	5186

3. & 4.

Each NICS Department is responsible for managing its own temporary recruitment and agency worker costs. As a result, the Department of Finance (DoF) does not hold the total cost of agency workers across all departments, either for the current financial year or for 2014/15, therefore cannot provide a departmental breakdown of these costs.

DoF does hold information on its own agency worker costs for the last financial year available 24/25, but it does not have records for its agency worker costs for 2014/15. See below for this figure:

Year	Cost (£'000)
2024/25	£6.464

5. Information regarding staffing levels before and after the 2015 Voluntary Exit Scheme is held by the Department but is exempt under Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as it is already reasonably accessible to you by other means. This information can be found in the Employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service reports published on the [NISRA website](#) and in the [NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme Post Project Evaluation Report](#). Analysis was also published by the Northern Ireland Audit Office which can be viewed on the [NIAO website](#).

Additional analysis held by the Department is attached in ANNEXES C - K listed below:

ANNEX C - Composition pre and post VES

ANNEX D - Male female breakdown ICT and non ICT grades for legal case

ANNEX E - GM-1057-2020

ANNEX F - Longitudinal PSTF Evaluation Questionnaire – NICS

ANNEX G - NICS Staff by Gender Grade and Age - Apr14 and Oct16

ANNEX H - NISRA - PSTF Questionnaire

ANNEX I - Pre and Post VES - Community Background and Gender

ANNEX J - Submission and information for Minister - VES exits compared to
departmental headcount and applicants

ANNEX K - Summary of staff in post and leavers

DoF Ref	Title	Description
ANNEX C	Composition pre and post VES	Comparing figures by grade pre and post VES
ANNEX D	Male female breakdown ICT and non ICT grades for legal case*	NICS staff as at 23 September 2015 and 2016 broken down by ICT and non ICT grades by department and sex
ANNEX E	GM-1057-2020	Fixed Term/Temporary staff broken down by Department as at 1 April 2015 -2019
ANNEX F	Longitudinal PSTF Evaluation Questionnaire – NICS*	Questionnaire for the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme
ANNEX G	NICS Staff by Gender Grade and Age - Apr14 and Oct16*	NICS staff broken down by sex, grade and community background, showing net reduction between April 14 and October 16
ANNEX H	NISRA - PSTF Questionnaire*	NICS headcount and FTE by salary and factored salary as at March 2015 and March 2019
ANNEX I	Pre and Post VES - Community Background and Gender	NICS permanent staff breakdown by grade, community background and sex, pre and post voluntary exit (1 July 2015 and 1 July 2016)
ANNEX J	Submission and information for Minister – VES exits compared to departmental headcount and applicants*	Permanent headcount by department 1 October 2014, 1 April 2015 and 1 April 2016. Comparison analysis of October 2014 to April 2015
ANNEX K	Summary of staff in post and leavers	NICS staff in post broken down by leavers including breakdown of retirement for 2013-14 to 2018-19

*Some information has been removed as it is out of scope of the request.

The Department does not hold any consolidated analysis, reports or briefing papers which directly compare staffing levels before and after the 2015 Voluntary Exit Scheme with the subsequent use and cost of agency staff.

As individual NICS Departments are responsible for managing their own staffing levels and agency worker usage, any relevant information would be held by those Departments rather than centrally by DoF.