

2026 NICS Provision of Agency Workers

USER GUIDE FOR NICS MANAGERS

Contract commencement date:

5 October 2026

This is a living document and will be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure it remains current, relevant and fit for purpose.

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Publish date	Key changes
V1.0	11/09/2026	New user guide
V1.1	05/10/2026	TRC name changed to Blue Arrow
		Para 4.5 – New Blue Arrow contract and supplier numbers added

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GLOSSARY

Agency Worker (AW)	Temporary Worker provided by a Recruitment Agency (RA) to provide services to the NICS on an Assignment.
ALB	'Umbrella' category including executive agencies, NDPBs, and non-ministerial departments. Arm's Length Bodies can use the Contract however are not supported by AWT. ALBs should discuss their requirements with CPD collaboration.cpd@finance-ni.gov.uk.
Assignment	The agreed period during which the Agency Worker is supplied by the Recruitment Agency to perform specific duties and work temporarily for and under the supervision and direction of the NICS.
AWR	The Agency Workers Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 (legislation.gov.uk)
Business Area	This is the Branch or Team to which the Agency Worker will be assigned as recorded on the initial request form.
Independent body	Whilst this term indicates operational 'independence' what this means in real terms varies widely but is not a formal classification. As the Independent body is resourced by substantive NICS staff they can seek support from NICS HR AWT.
Nominated Representative (Business Area)	A named representative within each business area who will be the operational point of contact for AWT and the Recruitment Agency on day-to-day matters. This person must be named on the Request Form.

Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB)	NDPB is A Public Body with a role in national government, operating at 'arm's length' from ministers. Arm's Length Bodies can use the Contract however are not supported by AWT. ALBs should discuss their requirements with CPD collaboration.cpd@finance-ni.gov.uk .
NICS Agency Worker Team (AWT)	AWT are a centralised Team within NICSHR Resourcing Division who facilitate Agency Worker assignments on behalf of NICS Departments, their Agencies, and a small number of Independent Bodies that AWT provide operational, procedural, management information and contractual advice, and support.
NICSHR Contract Manager	The NICSHR Contract Manager is located within NICSHR AWT and is appointed to oversee the contract on behalf of NICS Departments, their Agencies.
NICS DfC Contract Management Team	A separate DfC Contract Management Team appointed to manage the day-to-day operations of the Contract in respect of Lot 1 only. Issues around service delivery including timeliness of responses, unsatisfactory resolution of issues raised and concerns around performance against KPIs should be escalated to the DfC Contract Management Team via their mailbox: AgencyWorkersContract@communities-ni.gov.uk
NICSHR	Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources.
BPSS	Baseline Personnel Security Standard
CTC	Counter Terrorism Check
SC	Standard Clearance
CPD	Construction and Procurement Delivery
Evidence of Eligibility (EE)	Evidence of Eligibility is detailed on pro-forma by the Recruitment Agency to address the requirements on the initial job request template and will confirm that the Agency Worker meets these requirements. EEs are

	anonymised and will be issued directly to business areas for its consideration and approval. CVs are no longer appropriate.
Agency Worker Request Form	The Agency Worker Request Form published on ESP by NICSHR Agency Workers Team is the official request form for the 2026 Agency Worker Contract. Business Areas should use the versions as follows: • Agency Worker Request Form (DfC Lot 1 only) • Agency Worker Request Form (Excluding Lot 1)
Vendor Management System (VMS)	Each recruitment agency has developed a separate online system for AWT to process Agency Worker requests on behalf of Departments.
Time Management System (TMS)	Each Agency has developed a separate online system for processing and approving timesheets electronically. Access, training, and support for TMS is provided by each Agency. NB. Agency Workers who do not have access to IT e.g. Rangers, should submit Time Sheets for approval in the normal way. Business areas should discuss with the relevant Agency.
Time Sheet Approvers (TSA)	Time Sheet Approvers are nominated by a business area, usually the Agency Worker's Line Managers, to approve an Agency Worker's weekly time sheet.
Transition	Transition is the term used to describe the switch from the NICS Agency Worker 2021 Contract to a new 2026 Contract. This process will include the migration of Agency Workers currently on assignment to the new framework. Transition FAQs available at: <u>2026 Agency Worker Guidance Documents and forms</u>

1. Background - About this User Guide

1.1 This User Guide for Managers is designed to provide advice and information to managers and business areas who have Agency Workers assigned to them using the Agency Workers Contract 2026 (referred hereafter as the Contract).

1.2 The scope of this contract will include the sourcing and supply of the following roles (and analogous positions):

- General Service roles AA to EO1 (Lot 1)
- General Service roles AA to EO2 (Lot 2)
- Specialist, Technical and Professional roles
- Staff Officer, Deputy Principal Accountants and financial roles;
- ICT roles

Business areas should complete the Agency Worker Request Form (Excluding Lot 1) available on Employee Services Portal (ESP) at **2026 NICS Agency Worker request form** and send to AWT in the normal way as described in section 4.

1.3 Auditors and OHS Medical roles are not covered within this current Contract. If a business area requires Agency Workers to fill Auditors and OHS Medical roles, they should seek advice from CPD collaboration.cpd@finance-ni.gov.uk

1.4 This Guide is also published and updated on the HRConnect Portal. Please be aware that this is a living document and will be amended periodically as the contract and business need evolves.

2026 Agency Worker Contract

1.5 The Department of Finance established a number of Contracts with Recruitment Agencies to provide Agency Workers to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments, Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies and other Participating Independent Bodies.

Note: Whilst ALBs and NDPB can use this 2026 contract, This Guide is designed to provide advice and guidance to NICS core departments and a small number of Independent Bodies

who are supported by NICSHR.

1.7. The 2026 Contract should only be used to fill short term vacancies required for urgent business needs that cannot be met in any other way. The Contract must not be used to fill posts for indefinite periods, because doing so implies that the role is not temporary and should be managed through the standard mechanisms for establishing and resourcing permanent posts.

1.8. Agency Workers can remain on assignment within the requesting business area for as long as there is a business need and no alternative resourcing solution is available. Business areas must continue to review their need for Agency Workers and must consider other methods to fill including the filling of vacancies with permanent staff.

1.9. If there is no longer a business need for an Agency Worker, the business area should contact the Agency (by email, cc'ing in AWT) to advise that the assignment is ending and give the Agency an end date. The Agency will then contact the worker to inform the worker and ensure any business area property is returned.

1.10. If an assignment is being ended early due to unsatisfactory performance etc please see section 15.0.

1.11. The Contract must be used in conjunction with NICSHR policies and procedures which are applicable under the Agency Worker Regulations (AWR).

1.12. Decisions made by any business area, which are contrary to: NICS policies; the terms of this Guide; or ad hoc advice provided by AWT, will be the responsibility of the business area.

Queries

1.13. Should you have any queries regarding this Guide, or you would like to provide feedback or make suggestions on its content please email:

DOJ/PPS – NICSHR.Doj/PPSAgencyWorkersTeam@justice-ni.gov.uk

All other NICS Departments – NICSHR.AgencyWorkersTeam@finance-ni.gov.uk

2. Delivery Compliance and Timescales

2.1. Recruitment Agencies are required to comply with all relevant legislation with regards to its supply of the Agency Workers, including the AWR.

2.2. The Recruitment Agency must contact the business area's Nominated Representative within 24 hours of receipt of job request from NICSHR AWT. The Agency will acknowledge receipt of the request, clarify its processes, and discuss the timeframe for completing the request.

3. Contract Management

3.1 The NICSHR Contract Manager will oversee the overall Contract on behalf of NICS Departments and their Agencies.

Note: Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) and Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) may access the Contract where appropriate; however, they will not receive support from the Agency Worker Team (AWT). All queries and requests from ALBs and NDPBs should be directed to Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD) at collaboration.cpd@finance-ni.gov.uk.

3.2. A separate DfC Contract Management Team within DfC will manage the day-to-day operations of the Contract in respect of Lot 1 (DfC only). Issues around service delivery including timeliness of responses, unsatisfactory resolution of issues raised and concerns around performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be escalated to the DfC Contract Management Team: AgencyWorkersContract@communities-ni.gov.uk

3.3. NICSHR Resourcing AWT will facilitate Agency Worker assignments on behalf of NICS Departments and a small number of Independent Bodies. AWT can provide operational, procedural, contractual advice as appropriate, and act as escalation point for business areas.

3.4. Requests for Agency Workers should be sent to the AWT using the appropriate Agency Workers Request Form, a link to these forms are available on Employee Services Portal (ESP) at **2026 NICS Agency Worker Request Form**

3.5. Within 24 hours of receipt of the request, the Recruitment Agency will contact the business area Nominated Representative to confirm the next steps. The Recruitment Agency will provide suitable candidates, agree start dates, and discuss any reasonable adjustments the worker may require, if applicable.

3.6. Business areas should note that new Purchase Order (PO) numbers will be required for the 2026 Contract, however these will not be available until after go live of the new Contract on 5 October. Business areas may submit their requests as normal but will be expected to provide new PO to the recruitment agency as soon as they become available.

4.0 Requesting an Agency Worker

4.1. The Vacancy Management process must be followed, and evidence gathered that there is no supply of substantive staff available before a request for an Agency Worker can be made to fill a permanent vacancy. A check may be carried out by NICSHR to ensure the filling of vacancies process has been followed.

4.2 For audit and monitoring purposes, the business area should prepare a Business Case and a Funding & Headcount form for each request. These should be retained by the business area for audit purposes. Do not forward the Business Case or Funding & Headcount to AWT.

4.3. Remember to ensure the appropriate Agency Worker Request Form is completed in full, a link to these forms is available on Employee Services Portal (ESP) at **2026 NICS Agency Worker Guidance documents and forms** and sent to the appropriate AWT mailbox.

2026 NICS Agency Worker Contract Lot Structure

4.4. As demonstrated in table at Annex B, the Contract is divided into 8 Lots This Annex outlines sample job roles contained within each Lot.

Note. The list of sample job roles is for illustrative purposes and is not exhaustive. Should the business area wish to add job roles to this list it must seek advice from either NICSHR Grading Unit or the Head of Profession, ensuring (for pay purposes) that each role is correctly analogous to NICS grades.

4.5. Each Lot has been awarded to a specific Recruitment Agency.

These are as follows:

Note: The Recruitment Agency Co (TRC) has changed it's name to Blue Arrow

Lots	Recruitment Agency	AccountNI Contract No.	Supplier No.
1 (DfC ONLY)	Blue Arrow	6150269797	959271
2	Blue Arrow	6100094125	959271
3, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 9	Just Dynamic Recruitment (JDR)	6100093405	953146
6	Staffline Recruitment	6100093407	37923

4.6 The business area will request an Agency Worker for a particular assignment by completing the Agency Worker Request Form (a link to these forms are available on (ESP) at **2026 Agency Worker Guidance Documents and forms** Remember, it is essential that all parts of the correct form are completed in full before submitting to the AWT.

Note

- Incomplete or incorrect request forms will be returned to the business area for completion and/or correction.*
- It is essential that the correct naming convention of the branch is used as per HRConnect hierarchy.*

DfC LOT 1 ONLY : If the applicable Cost Centre is not listed on the LOT 1 Job Request Form, DfC LOT 1 managers should contact **Debbie Mulligan** in CPPT (Debbie.Mulligan@communities-ni.gov.uk) to arrange for a Purchase Order to be raised.

- For all requests, business areas must complete the correct Grade and Job Role Required endorsed by NICSHR Grading Unit with the correct HR Connect naming convention.*

- *When requesting your Purchase Order Number, it is imperative that you do not overestimate the value of your Purchase Order.*
- *It is also critical that you review the value of your PO number periodically throughout the duration of the assignment to ensure there are sufficient funds in place and, where appropriate, close Purchase Order Numbers e.g. when an assignment has ended.*

4.7. When a correctly completed Request Form is received, the AWT will transcribe the details from the Request Form onto the Recruitment Agencies Vendor Management System. The Recruitment Agency will contact the business area Nominated Representative that is named on the Request Form directly to confirm receipt, clarify any issues and advise them of next steps.

4.8. Recruitment Agencies have processes in place to source suitable Agency Workers from its talent pool as requested on the Request Form. Where the Agency cannot source a Worker from its own talent it will act as a Master Vendor and liaise with other Recruitment Agencies on NICS behalf to seek appropriate candidates.

4.9. Based on the job outline provided by the business area on the Agency Worker Request Form, the Recruitment Agency will advertise the vacancy on its various recruitment platforms and select suitable candidates for the placement.

Note. It is important that when completing the Request Form the business area provides sufficient information about the vacancy as this will be used by the Agency when advertising the post to potential candidates.

4.10. Business areas may request Eligibility Evidence (EE)'s for each placement, the Recruitment Agency will provide EEs to the business area Nominated Representative

Note. It was agreed by DfC Senior Management that EEs are not applicable to DfC business areas that use Lot 1. However, if the business area wishes to request EEs as an exception, please contact AgencyWorkersContract@communities-ni.gov.uk for advice and approval.

4.11. No personal information (e.g. name, age, marital status, school, or university attended etc.) will be included within the EE supplied.

4.12. The Recruitment Agency will ensure that the EE provided meets the Essential Skills, Qualifications and the necessary experience required for the placement as set out on the Agency Worker Request Form.

Note. For Non-General Service business areas should clearly stipulate at a minimum the essential qualifications they require for the role.

4.13. If the post is an existing substantive role, the post will already have been graded. You should use the information for the substantive post to help populate the job request form for the agency role.

4.14. For new roles, the post will need to be graded and the information re qualifications etc can then be used to help populate the job request.

In all cases, business areas should do their due diligence to ensure consistency.

4.15. For posts where the equivalent substantive role has no qualification criteria (due to alternative recruitment processes) the following table can be used as a guide:

Admin Grades
AA – 2 GCSEs (or equivalent) incl. English & Maths
AO – 5 GCSEs with a minimum of 12 months' experience incl. English & Maths
EO2 – 2 A levels with a minimum of 12 months' experience
EO1 – 2 A levels with a minimum of 18 months' experience
SO – a degree with a minimum of 12 months' experience
DP – a degree with a minimum of 1-2 years' experience
Grade 7 – a degree with a minimum of 3 years' experience
Grade 6 – a degree with a minimum of 3 years' experience

4.16. Blue Arrow has been advised of the minimum qualifications and experience for each General Service job role, so you do not need to include qualifications, skills, or experience for these roles.

Note: For some General Service / Administrative roles, requesting an EE may not be appropriate.

4.17. Before the start of an Agency Worker's assignment, the Recruitment Agency will have considered any request for reasonable adjustments. The Recruitment Agency will refer any requests to the business area for consideration.

Note. If, during the assignment, the Agency Worker advises the business area that they may require reasonable adjustments, the business area should direct the Agency Worker to the Recruitment Agency.

The NICS Reasonable Adjustment Policy applies to NICS employees only and does not extend to agency workers. However, business areas may refer to the NICS policy for guidance purposes only when considering adjustment requests raised through a recruitment agency. This can help business areas ensure decisions are proportionate, consistent, and aligned with the general approach taken within NICS, while recognising that Agency Workers follow a separate process through their recruitment agency.

4.18. Prior to the beginning of an Agency Worker's assignment, the Recruitment Agency will inform the business area of any conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest which may prevent an Agency Worker taking up a post. If, during an assignment, a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest is identified, this should be raised immediately by the business area with the Recruitment Agency.

4.19. If a business area is informed by the Recruitment Agency of a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest, the business area will be asked to consider the Conflict of Interest and confirm if the conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest renders the candidate unsuitable for placement.

4.20. If there is any conflict or potential conflict of interest is identified, the business area may ask the Recruitment Agency to have the worker complete a conflict-of-interest statement or a confidentiality agreement prior to the commencement date. The Recruitment Agency will retain this statement in line with GDPR.

4.21. The information contained within the EE and any subsequent correspondence relating to Agency Workers should only be used for the purpose for which it has been gathered/provided in accordance with GDPR and retained in line with your business areas Retention and Disposal Policy.

4.22. The Agency will aim to provide you with an EE as soon as possible, it is crucial that when the business area receives an EE that it is acted upon promptly, within 48 hours of receipt. This will reduce delays and mitigate the risk of the Agency Worker choosing another assignment.

5.0 Selection and Placement of Agency Workers

5.1. Agency Workers are not contracted to or employed by NICS, therefore NICS **must not** participate in any form of shortlisting or selection procedures. Business areas **should not** ask to meet or have informal chats with an Agency Worker prior to the acceptance of the EE, as this would be considered as NICS involvement in the selection process.

5.2. It is the responsibility of the Recruitment Agency to verify that the Agency Worker fully meets the qualification, experience, essential skills, or accreditation / membership of professional body as requested by the business area on the initial Agency Worker Request Form.

5.3. As stated previously, upon receipt of the EE, the business area should consider and provide a response on whether the individual is suitable within two working days. If the individual is unsuitable, the business area must provide their clear rationale to the Recruitment Agency as to why the EE does not meet its requirements as stated on the Agency Worker Request Form. The business area may be asked to provide further detail of the reason for any rejection.

5.4. If the business area feels that the EE has not given enough detail to make a decision, they should advise the Recruitment Agency immediately of the detail not included.

5.5. The business area may require the Recruitment Agency to arrange a specialist medical referral prior to the Agency Worker filling a post. The Agency Worker will not be placed unless the outcome is deemed satisfactory. These medical referrals may take place at a nominated location provided by the business area or, where the business area cannot provide this facility, Recruitment Agency may be requested to source this facility independently. It is the responsibility of Recruitment Agency to pay for any specialist medical referrals e.g.

Occupational Vaccines and claim back expenses through the appropriate miscellaneous claim form.

5.6. The Recruitment Agency must discuss and confirm the job role with the Agency Worker prior to them accepting the placement.

5.7. The Recruitment Agency will inform the Agency Worker that they must comply with all NICS policies, procedures and protocols including,

- Dignity at Work,
- GDPR,
- NICS Code of Ethics,
- Use of Electronic Communications Policy, (incl. social media)
- Hybrid Working Policy and
- Health and Safety.

5.8. Prior to placement in the NICS the Recruitment Agency will advise the Agency Worker that they are not an employee of the NICS, and that the **placement will not create an employment contract between NICS and the Agency Worker.**

Note. There is no facility to 'convert' Agency Workers to permanent members of NICS, the only avenue open to Agency Workers is through external open competition.

5.9. If an Agency Worker is to work Night Shift, the Recruitment Agency must offer Agency Workers a free health assessment before they become a night worker. The Agency Workers do not have to accept.

6.0 Pre-Employment Checks and Security Clearance

6.1. The Recruitment Agency shall undertake AccessNI employment checks to verify that the Agency Worker meets the preconditions of the role. The Agency Worker must be fully compliant prior to commencement of the role.

6.2. An Agency Worker will also be subject to at least the Baseline Personnel Security Standard before commencement of an assignment. However, the business area may require a higher level of clearance, which should be recorded on the Agency Worker Request Form.

The Recruitment Agency will ensure that Agency Workers are fully compliant prior to the commencement of the assignment.

Note All Agency Workers must notify their Recruitment Agency if there has been a material change in their personal circumstances e.g., Criminal convictions or change of name / address. The Recruitment Agency will advise NICSHR Security Vetting Team immediately.

6.3. NICSHR Security Vetting Team will also carry out a separate security clearance check on all Agency Workers that are to be placed within NICS departments.

6.4. The Recruitment Agency will cover the costs for AccessNI security clearances. The business area will cover the costs incurred for Counter Terrorism Check (CTC) and above security clearances as appropriate.

6.5. Recruitment Agencies will advise the AWT if an Agency Worker has either previously held a permanent post within NICS or had a previous assignment ended by an NICS business area due to unsatisfactory performance or poor conduct. The AWT will consider the suitability of the Agency Worker before they are allowed to return to NICS on assignment.

6.6. Agency Workers assigned to DfC Lot 1, are required to provide proof of identity. DfC has a specific Security Clause within the Contract, which requires this information for the purposes of the prevention, detection, and prosecution of social security benefit fraud and to ensure the integrity of the underpinning ICT systems. Under a Data Sharing Agreement, Agency Workers will receive a Privacy Notice from Blue Arrow (on behalf of DfC) advising them their personal information will be shared by Blue Arrow with DfC.

6.7. Identification Documents required by DfC should be in the form of a Passport or UK driver's license. If the Agency Worker does not possess a passport or UK driver's license, they shall provide their birth certificate or marriage certificate along with any recent utility bill or bank statement that contains their name and home address.

7.0 Working hours

7.1. Unless otherwise agreed with the Recruitment Agency the normal working pattern of an Agency Worker will be 7.4 hours on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday

exclusive of meal breaks i.e. a maximum of 37 hours per week (5 x 7.4 hrs). Any hours exceeding 7.4 hours per day should be recorded as flexi or overtime, whichever is appropriate.

Note. Each Agency will provide training and support to both the Agency Worker and the Timesheet Approver. Any queries regarding the completion of timesheets should be directed to the appropriate Agency.

7.2. The business area may require the Agency Worker to work Alternative Working Patterns (AWP) from the pattern outlined in paragraph 7.1. The specific hours of those assignments must be specified on the Agency Worker Request Form.

7.3. Individual business areas may require the Agency Worker to work an AWP including shift working covering a 24-hour period that involves extended hours of duty, for example 12-hour shifts. Shift Disturbance Allowance (SDA), Night Duty Allowance (NDA) or premium payments for weekend working will apply where the criteria set out in the NICS HR Handbook policies are met, details of which will be informed in consultation with the local business area requirements.

Note. All allowances (including correct percentages), contracted hours and shift patterns must be confirmed by the business area and detailed on the original Agency Worker Request Form.

7.4. The NICS shift disturbance and night duty policy is available at: [8.24 Shift disturbance and night allowance](#). As Agency Workers are entitled to the same rate of pay as substantive staff, this policy will allow business areas to calculate the correct rate of pay due to Agency Workers.

7.5. The payment of SDA for permanent staff is conditional on a working pattern which includes a proportion of hours worked outside the core hours. Therefore, Agency Workers are only eligible for SDA when their working pattern qualifies them for it. The initial weeks e.g. for training and consolidation, are worked on a 9-to-5 work pattern and may not therefore qualify for SDA.

7.6. Business areas should clearly specify on the Agency Workers Request Form the exact date from when the SDA will start e.g. on completion of training period.

8.0. Annual Leave / Flexi Leave

8.1. It is the responsibility of the Agency Worker and the Recruitment Agency to monitor annual leave entitlement and determine if paid or unpaid leave is taken. The business area is only responsible for agreeing if the leave can be accommodated.

8.2. Once the business area has agreed that leave can be accommodated it will be up to the individual to apply for leave from the Recruitment Agency.

8.3. Agency Workers will accrue leave from the first day of assignment and will only be able to take paid leave when they have accrued sufficient hours to cover the period requested. The Recruitment Agency is responsible for monitoring annual leave entitlement; however, the business area may discuss with the Agency should they have any concerns.

Note: Worker who remain on assignment for five years or more, with no breaks of more than 6 weeks between assignments become eligible for an additional five days' annual leave. This is in line with the Agency Workers Regulations and NICS policy.

8.4. Agency Workers must take any annual leave which is owed to them before the end of an assignment. However, if this is not possible e.g. due to refusal of annual leave for business reasons, the Agency will pay the Agency Worker for any Annual Leave accrued but not taken at the end of the Assignment.

8.5. If flexi time is available to the permanent staff within the user's business area, then it must also be made available to the Agency Worker on the same terms as substantive staff in accordance with the NICS Policy. If any flexi time has been accrued, then it must be taken before the end of an assignment. However, if this is not possible e.g. due to refusal of flexi leave for business reasons, the Recruitment Agency can request payment for accrued flexi leave untaken at the end of the assignment.

Flexi hours are recorded on the Agency Workers flexi sheet only. Flexi hours must not be entered on the Agency Workers timesheet.

*Note: If the Agency Worker works a normal 5-day week office hours they can only accrue a maximum of 3 days flexi **credit** (22.hrs 15. Mins) in any four-week flexi accounting period. If the Agency Worker works a normal 5-day week office hours they can only accrue a maximum deficit of 2 days flexi (14.hrs 50. Mins) in any four-week flexi accounting period.*

8.6. Flexi leave cannot be used to cover Public and Privilege Holidays, Agency Workers are expected to use their accrued Annual Leave. If sufficient annual leave has not been accrued, then in exceptional circumstances, unpaid leave may be used. The Agency Worker must discuss any request for unpaid leave with their Agency.

8.7. If, at the end of an assignment, there is a flexi deficit for an Agency Worker the business area must advise the Recruitment Agency ASAP of the number of deficit hours. The Recruitment Agency, where possible, will reduce the individual's final pay by the number of deficit hours and adjust the final invoice accordingly.

8.8. An Agency Worker will not be allowed to carry over flexi leave from one NICS assignment to another new assignment in NICS.

8.9. Annual leave must be recorded on the Agency Workers timesheet in accordance with the Agencies TMS procedures. Agency Worker's queries regarding the recording of annual leave should always be referred to their Agency.

8.10. Paid time off for medical appointments (including dental and eyecare) will apply from day 1 of their assignment.

Note. There is no provision for an Agency Worker to request paid time off for medical treatments e.g. physio, counselling etc.

8.11. Agency Workers cannot apply for leave under the NICS Special Leave Policy e.g. in the event of a domestic crisis, bereavement etc. Agency Workers should always be directed to their Agency who may be able to offer support.

8.12. If an Agency Worker starts a period of maternity leave during an assignment, the Recruitment Agency will arrange for a replacement Agency Worker. Business areas will be required to complete a new Request Form and submit to AWT for the replacement Agency Worker.

Should the assignment finish during the period of maternity leave, the business area will advise the Recruitment Agency in advance of the end date. The Recruitment Agency will inform both Agency Workers that the assignment has ended and arrange for the return of any equipment etc.

When the Agency Worker is ready to return following their maternity leave, they will contact the Recruitment Agency. The Recruitment Agency will then contact the business area (if the assignment is still ongoing) to arrange a date of return, and an end date for the replacement worker.

8.13. When an Agency Worker is on annual leave, they will not be paid by the business area. The hourly rate charged by the Recruitment Agency is calculated to include holiday pay. This calculation also includes all Public and Privilege Holidays.

Note. The Recruitment Agency shall have processes in place to ensure that the Agency Worker only takes leave when they have accrued sufficient leave to cover the period requested.

Note. If an Agency Worker works on a Public and Privilege Holiday they must submit an annual leave request to their Agency in the normal way.

If they are required to work on a Public and Privilege Holiday, the Agency Worker must submit an annual leave request to their Agency and record the actual hours worked on that day on their timesheet.

8.14. If Agency Worker leaves work early e.g. due to sickness, the Agency Worker must only record the actual hours of attendance on their timesheets.

8.15. Agency Workers may join a recognised trade union; however, Agency Workers cannot join local TU committees, receive facility time paid or unpaid to attend union meetings, conferences, or other trade union activity during normal working hours.

9.0 Overtime

9.1. Workers may be required to work overtime during normal weekdays or at weekends. On occasions when overtime is an option, the Agency Worker must have completed the

conditioned 37 hours before overtime rates are applicable. The conditioned hours can be made up from time worked, paid annual leave or flexi leave. Days of sickness absence or unpaid leave do not count as conditioned hours worked. Any deficit of the conditioned hours will be paid at the normal rate until the 37 hours is reached. Saturday and Sunday Premium is applicable in line with NICS Overtime Policy.

9.2. The NICS overtime policy is available at: NICS Overtime Pay . As Agency Workers are entitled to the same rate of pay as substantive staff, this overtime policy will allow business areas to check the correct rate of pay due to Agency Workers.

Note. If an Agency Worker is required to work during a Public and Privilege Holiday, they are still required to submit a holiday form to their Agency.

10.0 Management of Agency Worker by business area

10.1. Agency Workers are not contracted NICS staff, however whilst on assignment to NICS they are under its care, direction, and supervision.

10.2. The business area must ensure that Agency Workers receive appropriate training, guidance, and equipment to allow them to carry out their specific duties effectively and efficiently.

Note. This includes Health and Safety Policies, Dignity at Work Policies, Electronic Communications policy (including social media accounts) and GDPR policy and any other relevant guidance. This training should be provided to the Agency Workers, via LInKS, at the beginning of the assignment and refreshed as necessary.

To set up a LInKS account, Line Managers must email NICS HR L&D Digital Learning Unit NICSHRL&D.DigitalLearningUnit@finance-ni.gov.uk directly providing:

- i) the name and email addresses of the Agency Worker and
- ii) the Agency Worker's Line Manager name and email address.

Note. Business areas must advise NICSHR Learning & Development when the Agency Workers assignment has ended so that their LInKS account can be closed.

10.3. The business area will act as the Agency Worker's manager during their assignment and ensure that all timesheets are approved on time on the Agency's TMS.

10.4. The business area must not discuss any employment terms and conditions with the Agency Worker. Instead, the Agency Worker should be advised to speak to the Recruitment Agency about all employment and contractual issues including pay.

10.5. The Recruitment Agency will manage any issues raised by the business area in respect of poor performance, conduct or disciplinary matters.

Note. This can be done by email or (for Blue Arrow workers) by the Blue Arrow monitoring form.

The Agency may, during their assignment, seek feedback from the business area on the Agency Workers performance and relay this to Agency Worker.

Note. Under Social Security Legislation, DfC has a security clause which requires that DfC investigate any security breaches or benefit fraud. DfC Managers should contact: agencyworkerscontract@communities-ni.gov.uk for further information.

10.6. The business area will carry out any Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessments relating to the work required. The Recruitment Agency is responsible for conducting and paying for all other assessments e.g. new and expectant mother assessments and eye testing.

Note. The Agency Worker cannot access financial support through the NICS Eye Care Scheme.

10.7. The business area is responsible for maintaining a safe working environment and safe working practices and where appropriate may consider, along with the Recruitment Agency, any reasonable adjustments.

Note. The Agency Worker cannot access NICS Welfare Support Services but should be directed to their Recruitment Agency who will consider what support services are available.

10.8. The Agency Worker is assigned to perform a specific role in a specific business area therefore they:

- Must not be moved to other areas of work not included in the original assignment;
- Must not have changes to the roles to which they were originally assigned;
- Must not be temporary promoted;
- Must not have their assignment hours changed e.g. from full time to part time;
- Must not participate in any NICS volunteering activities including First Aid Officers; Health and Safety Officers, partake in Team building or charitable events e.g. tree planting, litter picking or bag filing.

10.9. If the business area relocates to another location, this will be a change to the Agency Worker's assignment. Business areas may be required to end the Agency Workers assignments and resubmit new request forms to AWT. Business Areas should seek advice from AWT as soon as possible.

10.10. If the business area relocates the Recruitment Agency will decide which Agency Workers will move locations – the business area should not canvas or select Agency Workers to move to new locations. Business Areas, if required, should seek advice from AWT as soon as possible.

10.11. Through its Hybrid Working Policy the NICS is committed to promoting flexibility and choice at work with the aim of meeting both the needs of the service and its employees, this also includes Agency Workers. It must be noted that the policy does not allow staff to work from home or remotely outside of the UK and Ireland.

10.12 . All Agency Workers should therefore have a **Workstyle Agreement (WSA)** in place. This WSA is agreed between the individual worker and their NICS line manager. As Agency Workers are not NICS employees, **completed WSAs must be forwarded to the relevant Recruitment Agency for retention.**

Completed WSA should be forwarded to their appropriate agency using the following contact details:

- **Blue Arrow** – nicshybridworking@premiere-agency.com
- **JDR**– nics@jdr.co.uk
- **Staffline** – nics@staffline.co.uk

10.13. The Workstyle Agreement (WSA) Form is available on the Employee Services Portal (ESP).

10.14. **As completed WSA are retained by the Recruitment Agency, any copies you may hold** either in electronic form (on outlook) or in hardcopy, must be disposed of securely, once the request has been processed.

10.15. **Agency Workers have no right of appeal** under this policy. If an Agency Worker does not agree with their workplace arrangements, they should use their Agency's complaints process to raise their concern(s). The Agency will consider and liaise with the business area as required. Further information on Agency Workers' complaints can be found at Section 16 of this guide. Agency Workers are required to comply fully with the Hybrid Working Policy.

11.0 Travel and Subsistence

11.1. Where business travel is a requirement of the role it should be detailed on the Agency Worker Request Form.

11.2. Where the Agency Worker is requested to use personal transport to fulfil the duties of the post (other than travel to and from the location of the placement), the Agency Worker may be entitled to travel and subsistence (T&S) in line with NICS policy and rates from the first day of assignment.

11.3. T&S claims must be submitted to the Recruitment Agency for payment. Should the business area or Agency Worker have any query regarding claiming T&S they must contact the relevant Agency.

11.4. The Agency Worker must have the necessary insurance when using their own vehicle and the Recruitment Agency must check and confirm that this is in place.

12.0. Agency Workers' Pay

12.1. Pay parity will apply from the first day of placement. This means that an Agency Worker must be paid at a rate equivalent to that of the minimum of the pay scale at commencement of an assignment, unless they were on a higher pay scale during a previous assignment that had ended less than 6 weeks prior to the commencement of the new assignment.

Note: Agency Workers who have a gap of 6 weeks or more between assignments working in the NICS will revert to the minimum pay point.

12.2. The Recruitment Agency must ensure that all Agency Worker rates of pay comply with the NICS pay scales.

12.3. Allowances and premium payments, if appropriate to the assignment, will be applicable in accordance with the NICS Pay Policy and will be agreed by the business area. These allowances and premiums must be recorded by the business area on the Agency Worker Request Form.

12.4. The business area must ensure that the online time sheets are completed with the appropriate approvals on time to allow for the Agency Worker to be paid.

12.5. Once the NICS Pay Award is agreed centrally, NICSHR AWT will issue the new pay scales to Agencies.

12.6. Each Recruitment Agency will review their charge rates in line with the terms of any NICS pay awards or changes to pay scales. Before implementing any changes, the Recruitment Agency will agree these revised charges with NICSHR before any increases of pay for eligible Agency Workers can be made.

12.7. Once approved by NICSHR, any revalorisation, progression or restructuring arrangements will then be applied accordingly. The new charge rates or 'Client Cards' will be cascaded to business area contacts for information by AWT.

Note the Client Card is commercially sensitive and should not be shared with those who do not have a direct business need.

12.8. The Recruitment Agency manage all Agency Worker's pay related queries, including back pay and holiday pay queries. The business area **must not** discuss pay or other contractual matters with the Agency Worker.

12.9. Following the agreement of a NICS Pay Award, business areas will appoint a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to liaise with Agencies to assist the approval of back pay arrears process.

Note. Back pay arrears calculations will be the difference in pay rates multiplied by the number of hours that have already been approved by Timesheet Approvers each week.

12.10. If SPOCs or business areas have any queries regarding the calculations, they should raise with the Recruitment Agency immediately, as retrospective corrective action may not be possible.

13.0 The Time Management System (TMS)

13.1. Each Agency has created a digital Time Management System platform (TMS) to record hours worked and automate payment of salary.

13.2 Before an Agency Worker's assignment begins, the Recruitment Agency will contact timesheet authorisers with instructions and login details for the TMS.

13.3. Agency Workers will have access to TMS via an App on their personal mobile devices or internet. Managers will have access to TMS via Internet only.

13.4. Any queries about how to record or approve hours etc on the TMS should be raised with the appropriate Recruitment Agency.

13.5. Flexi is not to be recorded on the TMS. If the Agency Worker has access to Flexi, then a Flexi sheet should be held separately. The Agency Worker should record their actual start and end times on their Flexi sheet, and standard hours (e.g. 9 to 5) on their timesheet.

14.0 Purchase Order and Invoice Arrangements

14.1. The Recruitment Agency will invoice the business area every four weeks, in arrears, via AccountNI. The invoice will detail number of hours worked by the Agency Worker, appropriate rate charged and the purchase order number, if applicable. Invoices, credit notes and associated timesheets will be provided by the Recruitment Agency in pdf format via email and sent directly to AccountNI at invoices@accountni.gov.uk or electronically to the appropriate Finance Authority if payment is other than through AccountNI.

14.2. AccountNI send the invoices to the appropriate business area to validate. It is the responsibility of the business area to ensure each Agency Worker's hours/dates/pay point is correct.

14.3. Once the validation has been completed, the invoices should be returned to AccountNI, advising approval. Any anomalies identified regarding a Recruitment Agency Worker's hours worked/rate of pay should be raised immediately with either the Recruitment Agency Credit Controller or AccountNI immediately, as retrospective corrective action may not be possible.

14.4. To free up the unused PO values, Account NI have advised that departments should run a R401 report for each contract number and identify the purchase orders which have closed or should be closed. To reduce the value, add a column to the report titled "Reduce" and indicate the amount each purchase order should be reduced i.e. the difference between the value of the purchase order and the amount received. This should be sent to the procurement team in Account NI instructing them to reduce the value of the purchase orders. Further advice can be provided by your Departmental Finance Team or CPD.

14.5. Business areas must always use the correct NICS Hierarchy naming convention for their Branch at all times especially when requesting Agency Workers.

15.0 Unsatisfactory Agency Workers

15.1. If an Agency Worker is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the business area should report this immediately to the appropriate Recruitment Agency:

Blue Arrow – nicsteam@therecruitmentco.uk

JDR – nics@jdr.co.uk

Staffline – nics@stafflinerecruit.com

15.2. When reporting unsatisfactory performance, it is important to stipulate exactly what has happened to date and what action the Business Area requires taken e.g. discussion regarding the poor performance or unsatisfactory behaviour or the ending of Worker's assignment.

In respect of DfC Lot 1, unsatisfactory performance by an Agency Workers assigned through Blue Arrow should be reported using a Monitoring Form. For further advice relating to the completion of Monitoring Forms please contact AgencyWorkersContract@communities-ni.gov.uk

15.3. The Recruitment Agency is responsible for having all performance management or managing attendance conversations etc with the Agency Worker.

Note The Agency may, from time to time, ask the business area to give feedback on its Agency Worker's performance. This may form part of the Agency's internal review processes.

15.4. DfC Lot 1 Only: In the event of suspected security breach or benefit fraud, business areas should not contact the Agency in the first instance to report. Instead contact AgencyWorkersContract@communities-ni.gov.uk for further guidance on how to proceed.

15.5. The AWT reserves the right to decline or cease to use the services of an Agency Worker at any time for such reasons. In this respect the decision of the AWT is final.

15.6. If, following an end of an assignment, the business area requires a replacement a new Agency Worker Request Form must be submitted to AWT.

15.7. The business area should advise NICS HR L&D Digital Learning Unit NICSHRL&D.DigitalLearningUnit@finance-ni.gov.uk that the assignment has ended so the LInKS account can be deleted.

15.8. The business area should also remove access to its IT platforms and Content Manager User Groups ASAP.

16.0 End of Assignment - Unsatisfactory Performance

16.1. If an Agency Worker is unsatisfactory, the business area may decide to end the assignment. The assignment can be ended for any reason e.g. bad conduct, poor performance etc so long as the reason is lawful. There is not a requirement period for notice to be given.

16.2. The business area shall immediately inform the appropriate Recruitment Agency of the decision and any special requirements e.g. a preference that the worker be contacted immediately/after a certain time, and confirm:

- the actual end date of the assignment
- the reason for ending the assignment and
- if there is NICS equipment needing to be returned
- if a flexi deficit is to be recouped.

16.3. The Recruitment Agency will contact the Agency Worker to advise of End of Assignment. Business areas should not engage in any conversations regarding end of assignment with the worker, any queries from the Worker should be directed to the Recruitment Agency immediately.

16.4. The Recruitment Agency will arrange the safe return of NICS property including laptops and other devices and equipment. If after a reasonable time (approx.10 working days) the property has not been returned the business area (Non DfC Lot1) should contact AWT who will escalate with the Recruitment Agency.

16.5. DfC Lot 1 Only: For non-return of equipment issues, business areas should raise with DfC CMT AgencyWorkersContract@communities-ni.gov.uk for escalation.

16.6. The business area should advise NICS HR L&D Digital Learning Unit NICSHRL&D.DigitalLearningUnit@finance-ni.gov.uk that the assignment has ended so the LInKS account can be deleted.

16.7. The business area should also remove access to its IT platforms and Content Manager User Groups ASAP.

16.8. If, following an ending of an assignment, the business area requires a replacement Agency Worker, a new Agency Worker Request Form must be submitted to AWT.

17.0. End of Assignment - Business need ended/Worker has left assignment (Natural end)

17.1. If an Agency Worker is no longer required, the business area **must** notify the Agency and AWT as soon as possible. The business area should confirm:

- the actual end date of the assignment
- the reason for ending the assignment and
- if there is NICS equipment needing to be returned
- if a flexi deficit is to be recouped.

17.2. Any notice period given will be at the discretion of the business area, however the minimum notice period for ending an Agency Worker's assignment is normally one working day.

17.3. In some situations, particularly in large business areas, only some assignments may need to end i.e. out of a cohort of Agency Workers, some are required to remain on assignment.

The correct action to take in this situation is for the business area to advise the Agency of the revised numbers required. The Recruitment Agency will decide which Agency Workers assignments are to end – the business area must not get involved with selecting Agency Workers to remain on assignment as this is a decision for the Recruitment Agency.

17.4. The Recruitment Agency will contact the Agency Worker(s) and inform them of the assignment end date.

17.5. The Recruitment Agency will arrange the safe return of NICS property including laptops and other devices and equipment. If after a reasonable time (approx. 10 working days) the property has not been returned the business area (Non DfC Lot1) should contact AWT who will escalate with the Recruitment Agency.

17.6. DfC Lot 1 Only: For non-return of equipment issues, business areas should raise with DfC CMT AgencyWorkersContract@communities-ni.gov.uk for escalation.

17.7. Where an Agency Worker has decided to leave the assignment early, and where a replacement is required, the business area must submit a new Agency Worker Request Form to AWT.

17.8. The business area should advise NICS HR L&D Digital Learning Unit NICSHRL&D.DigitalLearningUnit@finance-ni.gov.uk that the assignment has ended so the LInKS account can be deleted.

17.9. The business area should also remove access to its IT platforms and Content Manager User Groups ASAP.

18.0 Complaints

18.1. If an Agency Worker wishes to make a complaint, the business area must direct them to their Recruitment Agency. The Recruitment Agency will have a Complaints Policy and investigatory processes in place for dealing with all complaints raised by Agency Workers.

18.2. The Recruitment Agency may, as part of its investigation into the complaint, contact the business area to seek clarification or a response to matters raised. At this point, the business area will consider such requests and may seek advice from NICSHR Employee Relations.

18.3. As part of an Agency Worker's complaint, Business Areas may be contacted by Labour Relations Agency or the Industrial and Fair Employment Tribunal. If you receive any such communications, you must forward them to NICS HR Litigation Unit

ANNEX A

Process for Requesting Agency Workers – All Business Areas

Step 1: The business area identifies a vacancy or new job role. The Vacancy Management process is followed considering all alternatives (i.e. temporary promotion, re-prioritisation of work and/or existing resources, departmental transfer opportunities, improving work processes, etc) before deciding that the vacancy or new job role needs to be filled.

Step 2: When all other options of filling the vacancy / new job role have been exhausted, the business area considers filling the post using an Agency Worker in the event it is a short-term vacancy required for urgent business needs e.g. covering temporary periods of absence (such as maternity leave or sick absence), working on a limited time project.

Step 3: If appropriate, the business area will follow the departmental approval process for filling temporary posts.

Step 4: The business area ensures that there is sufficient budget cover and will complete a proportionate business case for an Agency Worker(s). The business case is approved and retained within the business area.

Step 5: The business area raises a Purchase Order (PO) for the estimated spend for the Agency Worker(s).

DfC LOT 1 ONLY : If the applicable Cost Centre is not listed on the LOT 1 Job Request Form, DfC LOT 1 managers should contact **Debbie Mulligan** in CPPT (Debbie.Mulligan@communities-ni.gov.uk) to arrange for a Purchase Order to be raised.

Step 6: The business area completes the correct Agency Worker Request Form and sends it to the NICSHR Agency Worker Team's mailbox per para 4.

Step 7: The Recruitment Agency makes direct contact with the business area to discuss the requirements and proposes candidate(s).

Step 8: When the business area accepts a candidate, the Recruitment Agency will notify the candidate, arrange the start date, and inform the worker of their reporting details etc.

Step 9: The Recruitment Agency carries out all compliance and clearance checks before the worker starts the assignment.

2026 NICS AGENCY WORKER CONTRACT LOT STRUCTURE	Category Families	Job Roles (not exhaustive for all Lots)
Lot 1 DfC Administration roles and Corporate Functions	AA to EO1 - Administration, Personal Secretary, Senior Personal Secretary, Typist, Typing Manager	Administrative Assistant, Administrative Officer, Executive Officer 2, Executive Officer 1.
Lot 2 Administration Roles (excluding DfC) and Corporate Functions	AA to G6 (The contract does not include NICS General Services Roles EO1 to G6 however contract does include the analogous grades at these levels):- Administration, Secretaries, Receptionist, Personal Secretary, Typist and Telephonist, HR, Procurement, Project and Programme Management, Public relations, Media, Communications, Marketing, Customer Services, Library Services, Information Officer, Statistical, Research, Investigation, Graphic Design, Careers, Monitoring and Compliance, Business Consultant, Digital Consultant, Service Designers, User Researchers, Behavioural Scientists, System Dynamics Modellers, Human Rights Officers, Occupational Psychology, Governance, Contract Management, Lecturing, Teaching and Training.	Administrative Assistant, Administrative Officer, Executive Officer 2, AO Caseworker (Valuation), Personal Secretary, Typist and Telephonist, Assistant Investigation Officer, Statistical/Research Officer, Procurement Manager, Senior Procurement Officer, Senior Information Officer, Information Officer, Assistant information Officer, Librarian, Assistant Librarian, Graphic Designer, Careers Adviser SO, Monitoring and Compliance Officer, Human Rights Assistant, Policing Board EO1, HR Partner, Business Consultant (SO), Digital Consultant (DP) Research and Information Officer, Marketing Officer, Careers Adviser EO1, Monitoring and Compliance Officer, Senior Business Consultant, Human Rights Assistant, Occupational Psychologist (Excluding OHS). Teachers (Prison Service), Teaching Assistant (Prison Service), Instructor, Trainer – DP, Trainer – SO, Trainer – EOI and Trainer – EOII. Education Researcher, Education Data Analyst HR Litigation Unit Case Manager – SO HR Policy roles Digital Transformation roles Artificial Intelligence (AI) roles.

Lot 3 Professional and Technical Roles	All applicable grade levels for this category are included: - Architecture, Archaeology, Engineering, Quantity Surveying, Clerk of Works, Vehicle, Vehicle and Traffic Examination, Valuation, Mapping and Charting, Curatorial, Fire officer, Number Plate Reading, Audio Visual, Accommodation/Facilities Management, Health and Safety, Planners Wardens and Area Supervisors. Inspector' or 'Criminal Justice Inspector' Education and Training Inspector. Conservator (e.g. PRONI)	Inspector II (Health and Safety), Health and Safety Officer, Fire Officer 1, Fire Officer 2, Automatic Number Plate Reader Operative, Driving Examiner, SPTO Health and Safety Advisor, HPTO Health and Safety Advisor, Traffic Examiner, Vehicle Examiner, Valuer Level 2, Assistant Valuer, AA-Placement Student/Intern (Valuation), Mapping & Charting Officer, Higher Mapping and Charting Officer, Curatorial Post Grade E, Conservator D (DP), Conservator E (SO), Conservator F (EO1), Archive AO, Archive EO2, Curatorial Post Grade F, Electronics Technician, PTO Planner, HPTO Planner, HPTO Architectural Assistant, SPTO Architectural Assistant, PPTO Architect, Conservation Area Architect, Architectural Technician, Student Architectural Assistant, Electrical Engineer, Electrical Engineering Technician, Student Electrical Engineer, Mechanical Engineer, Mechanical Engineering Technician, Student Mechanical Engineer, Civil Engineer, Civil Engineering Technician PTO, Student Civil Engineer, Structural Engineer, Student Structural Engineer, Engineering Technician in Civil Engineering, Mechanical or Electrical Engineering, Roads Service - Level 1, Engineering Technician in Civil Engineering, Mechanical or Electrical Engineering, Roads Service - Level 2, Engineering Technician in Civil Engineering, Mechanical or Electrical Engineering, Roads Service - Level 3, Engineering Technician Rivers Agency, Technical Grade 1 - Transport NI and Rivers, Quantity Surveyor, Quantity Surveying Technician, Student Quantity Surveyor, Mechanical Clerk of Works, HPTO Mechanical Clerk of Works, Electrical Clerk of works, HPTO Electrical Clerk of Works, HPTO Building Clerk of Works. Inspector' or 'Criminal Justice Inspector', Building Services Engineer, PTO Warden, Higher TG – Area Supervisor, Higher TG – Assistant Warden, Higher TG – Field Monument Warden, Accommodation/Facilities Manager, Student Support Officer and Archaeologist, Education and Training Inspector Educational Psychologist Senior leader in an Education Environment (school or college) Pre-school/Early Years specialist Special Needs Co-ordinator, Student Services Manager.
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Lot 4 Environmental, Scientific Services and Medical Roles (excluding OHS medical roles) and Agricultural, Environmental and Conservation job roles	All applicable grade levels for this category are included:- Conservation, Environmental and Scientific Services, Marine, Reporting Officers , Laboratory Management and Support and Medical. Inspecting (including meat, veterinary and fisheries, health and agriculture), Rangers (agricultural, horticulture and forest), Fisheries, Field Monument Warden, Countryside Management, Conservation, Food Technology, Land Based Supply Instructor and Lecturer (Agriculture/Horticulture/Floristry/Land based Engineering/Veterinary Nursing /Food Technology/Agri-business/ Equine/ Veterinary and Farriery) and Visitor Attraction Services.	Environmental Health Officer, Assistant Scientific Officer, Scientific Officer, Laboratory Attendant, Senior Scientific Officer (DP analogous), Higher Scientific Officer (SO analogous), Senior Purser, Purser, Skipper, Fleet Observer, Registered / Staff Nurse Excluding OHS, Health Assessment Advisor, Nurse Care Planning Assistant, Medical Attendant, Medical Personal Secretary, Medical Laboratory Assistant and Clinical Psychologist (G7) Excluding OHS. Land Based Supply Instructor, Land Based Supply Lecturer, Agricultural Inspector, Trade Certification Support Officer (TCSO), Supply Meat Inspector, Veterinary officer, Forest Ranger, Ranger, Site Guardian, Countryside Management Advisor, General Agriculture/Horticulture/Equine/Estate (Industrial), Horticultural Inspector, Seasonal Bee Health Inspector, Field Monument Warden, Tour Guide, Discovery Centre Facilitator , Front of House Assistant, Visitor Guide. Allied Health Professional and Speech and Language Specialist Agriculture Inspector Agri-Inspectors for Food including technically qualified staff.
Lot 5 Ancillary and Industrial Roles	All applicable grade levels for this category are included: - Catering, Cleaning, Ancillary Services, Drivers and Industrial roles.	Cooks, Assistant Cook, Domestic Assistant, Cleaners, Kitchen Porter, Catering Manager, Deputy Catering Manager, Head of Domestics, Catering Assistant, Stores Person , Commercial Catering Porter Unskilled Road Worker, Skilled Road Worker, Electrician, Joiner, Plasterer, Motor Mechanic , Conservation Walling Mason (Industrial), Conservation Labourer (Industrial), Conservation Blacksmith (Industrial), Conservation Joiner (Industrial), Conservation Banker Mason (Industrial), Driver, Rangers (Industrial), Seasonal temporary workers and Farm worker.
Lot 6 Legal Roles	All applicable grade levels for this category are included: - Legal	Senior Principal Legal Officer, Senior Public Prosecutor, Principal Legal Officer, Public Prosecutor, Legal Officer (Deputy Principal), Legal Assistant, Chief Law Clerk, Law Clerk I Law Clerk II, Drafting Supervisor 1 (Grade 5) and Drafting Supervisor 2 (Grade 6).

Lot 7 Youth and Social Care Roles	All applicable grade levels for this category are included: - Probation, Youth and Social Work	Probation officer, Probation Service Officer, Community Services Supervisor, Social Worker, Youth Conference Coordinator/Practitioner and Night Support Worker. Senior Youth Leaders, Lecturer or Researcher in Youth and Community Work, Youth Co-ordinators/Tutors in Media and Digital Literacy, Outdoor Learning Specialist.
Lot 8 Finance & Governance Roles	Economists, Finance SO/DP Accountants	SO/DP Accountant Accountant Technician, Part-qualified accountants, Finance Admin Assistant (AA), Finance Admin Officer (AO), Finance Officer (EO1), Senior Finance Officer (SO), Economist DP, Economist SO.
Lot 9 ICT Roles	ICT Roles	ICT2 (Technicians) AO ICT3 (Development) EO2 ICT3 (IT Specialists) EO2 ICT4 (Senior ICT Specialists) EO1 ICT5 (Lead ICT Specialists) SO ICT6 (ICT Managers).

2026 Agency Worker Contract - Transition FAQs

1. What is changing?

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has awarded a new Agency Worker Contract which will commence on **5 October 2026**. Agency Workers engaged under the current 2021 Agency Worker Contract and workers on the SO/DP Accountant Hays Contract on **4 October 2026** will transition to the new 2026 Agency Worker Contract, if their assignment continues beyond that date.

2. What does 'transition' mean?

Transition is the process of moving Agency Workers from the current Agency Worker Contract arrangements to the new Agency Worker Contract commencing on **5 October 2026**.

3. What are the key transition dates?

Activity	Date
Last date for new assignments to begin under the current contract	28 August 2026
Cut-off date/time for AWT processing Agency Worker requests under the current contract	28 August 2026 at 4pm
Pause on new Agency Worker requests begins	31 August 2026
Pause on new Agency Worker requests ends	13 September 2026
New requests accepted under the new contract (for start dates after 5 October 2026)	14 September 2026
New Agency Worker Contract goes live	5 October 2026

4. Which recruitment agencies have been awarded the new contract?

The following recruitment agencies have been awarded the new contract:

- The Recruitment Co
- Staffline Recruitment
- Just Dynamic Recruitment (JDR)

5. Will Agency Workers have to reapply for their current roles?

No. Where an assignment is continuing beyond **5 October 2026**, workers will transition to the new contractual arrangements rather than reapplying for their role.

6. Can assignments continue after 4 October 2026?

Yes. Assignments may continue beyond **4 October 2026** where there is an ongoing and approved business need. These assignments will transition to the new contract arrangements.

7. Will all Agency Workers need to change recruitment agencies?

Agency Workers will only change recruitment agency where the relevant Lot/Hays Contract transfers to a new agency under the new contract. Workers assigned under that Lot/Hays Contract will need to transfer to the new recruitment agency in order to continue their assignment. The new recruitment agency will contact the Agency Worker to arrange onboarding to the new contract.

8. Which Lots remain with the same recruitment agency?

The following Lots will remain with their existing recruitment agency:

- **Lot 1:** DfC Administration Roles & Corporate Functions (Blue Arrow)
- **Lot 2:** Administration Roles (excluding DfC) & Corporate Functions (Blue Arrow)
- **Lot 6:** Legal Roles (Staffline Recruitment. Previously Lot 7)

Workers in these Lots will still transition onto the new 2026 Agency Worker Contract.

9. Which Lots will move to a new recruitment agency?

Lot	Current Recruitment Agency	New Recruitment Agency
Lot 3 – Professional & Technical Roles	CPL	Just Dynamic Recruitment
Lot 4 – Environmental, Scientific Services & Medical Roles	The Recruitment Co	Just Dynamic Recruitment
Lot 5 – Ancillary & Industrial Roles	The Recruitment Co	Just Dynamic Recruitment
Lot 7 – Youth & Social Care Roles	The Recruitment Co	Just Dynamic Recruitment

Lot 8 - Finance & Governance Roles (formerly Hays SO/DP Contract)		
Hays SO/DP Contract	Hays	Just Dynamic Recruitment

Workers currently in these Lots/Hays contract will transfer to the new recruitment agency where their assignment continues.

10. Are there any new Lots in the new 2026 Agency Worker Contract?

Yes.

- **Lot 8:** Finance & Governance (Previously Hays contract, now Lot 8 with Just Dynamic Recruitment)
- **Lot 9:** ICT Roles (Just Dynamic Recruitment)

11. What happens if a worker's Lot changes recruitment agency?

If the assignment is expected to continue past **5 October 2026**, the worker will need to register with the incoming recruitment agency.

The worker will receive appropriate communications to support this process. The outgoing recruitment agency, incoming agency and NICSHR will work collaboratively to ensure a smooth transition from their recruitment agency.

12. Will Agency Workers experience any interruption to their assignments?

Every effort will be made to minimise disruption. NICSHR, current recruitment agencies and incoming recruitment agencies will work together to ensure continuity of service throughout the transition period.

13. Will line management arrangements change?

Where an assignment continues within the same business area, day-to-day management arrangements will not change, unless a line management change is implemented by the business area. The worker will receive appropriate communications to support this process.

14. Will workers keep the same workplace, duties and working arrangements?

Agency Workers will remain in their existing roles and business areas under the same working arrangements as before the **5 October**.

15. Will Agency Workers require new security checks or compliance requirements?

Any additional registration, identity verification, compliance or security requirements arising from the new contract will be communicated as part of the formal transition process.

16. What should business areas do now?

Business areas should:

1. Review all current Agency Worker assignments.
2. Confirm within the business area whether there is an ongoing business need beyond **5 October 2026**.
3. Identify assignments likely to transition.
4. Be aware that there will be new supplier and purchase order numbers required from **5 October 2026**.
5. Monitor communications from NICSHR.
6. Direct workers with queries regarding their transition to their current recruitment agency.

17. Can managers confirm future arrangements with Agency Workers now?

Managers may provide factual information about the transition process and ongoing business requirements where appropriate. However, managers should not make commitments or guarantees regarding future assignment arrangements until the relevant transition processes have been completed and formal confirmation has been issued. Agency Workers will be kept informed throughout the process, and the outgoing recruitment agency, incoming agency and NICSHR will work together to support a smooth transition.

18. How will timesheets be completed and authorised during the transition period?

Timesheets will be completed and authorised as per usual process up until **4 October 2026**. After **5 October 2026**, it is likely that there will be new systems for most if not all workers. If this is the case, the recruitment agency will ensure that full training is provided to workers and timesheet authorisers.

19. Will a new Agency Worker Request Form be required for existing workers who transition?

No separate process has currently been advised for workers whose assignments continue beyond **5 October 2026**. Further guidance will be issued if additional actions are required.

20. What should business areas do if they are unsure whether an assignment should continue?

Business areas should review the assignment and determine whether there is a genuine and ongoing business need beyond **5 October 2026**.

21. What happens if an assignment ends before October 2026?

Normal end-of-assignment procedures should be followed. Only assignments continuing beyond **5 October 2026** will form part of the transition arrangements.

22. What happens if an Agency Worker leaves before the transition date?

If a worker leaves before **5 October 2026** and a replacement is required, the business area should follow the recruitment and request processes applicable at that time.

23. What happens if an Agency Worker has accrued annual leave. Will the leave roll over into the new contract?

Where workers are remaining with the same recruitment agency, any accrued annual leave will roll over to the new contract.

Where workers are moving to a new recruitment agency, the process may vary. Managers should direct workers to their current recruitment agency to discuss any queries about the process.

If a worker had planned to take leave after **5 October 2026** but is unable to carry over accrued annual leave to a new recruitment agency, managers should look sympathetically at requests for unpaid leave to cover the period of intended leave. This should be a temporary process due to the exceptional circumstances of the transition.

24. An Agency Worker has a flexi debit/credit on 4 October 2026. What will happen to the flexi balance when transitioning to the new contract?

As the worker is not changing assignment, any flexi credit or debit will be unaffected and will continue across to the new contract.

This applies for all workers in areas where flexi is available, whether they are changing recruitment agency or not.

Line managers should continue to manage and monitor Flexi as per usual process.

25. An Agency Worker is currently on sick, maternity, or annual leave. Will they still transition to the new contract?

Yes. All workers currently engaged under the 2021 Agency Worker Contract and the SO/DP Accountant Hays Contract will transition across to the new contract, where there is a business need for the assignment to continue past **5 October 2026**.

26. Is there a pause on new Agency Worker requests?

Yes. A temporary pause on Agency Worker requests has been applied from the **31 August 2026** until **13 September 2026** inclusively.

The cut-off for the processing of requests received by the AWT was **28 August 2026 at 4pm**.

27. When can new Agency Worker requests be submitted under the new contract?

New requests will be accepted from **14 September 2026** for assignments with start dates after **5 October 2026**.

28. How can I request an Agency Worker under the new contract?

New Request Forms will be available at [HR - NICS Agency Workers Guide for Managers - Employee Services Portal v2](#) on or after **14 September 2026**.

29. Will a purchase order number be required?

Yes. New purchase order numbers will be required under the new contract.

However, as new purchase order numbers cannot be generated under the new contract until **5 October 2026**, business areas submitting Request Forms between **14 September 2026** until **4 October 2026** will not be able to provide a purchase order number on their request.

Business areas should ensure that they provide the new purchase order number directly to the agency as soon as possible after **5 October 2026**.

30. Will a new purchase order be required for existing workers who transition?

Yes. New purchase order numbers will be required for all workers who have transitioned to the new contract.

New purchase order numbers cannot be generated until **5 October 2026**. As soon as possible after **5 October 2026**, business areas should generate new purchase order numbers for all workers who have transitioned to the new contract and send these to the recruitment agency.

31. Will departments need to make financial preparations?

Yes. Departments should prepare for:

- New purchase order requirements.
- New supplier arrangements where applicable.
- Updated financial coding and invoicing processes.
- Any readiness activities communicated by NICSHR.

32. What support will be provided during the transition?

NICSHR will:

- Issue further guidance as necessary.
- Engage with departmental stakeholders.
- Provide operational and procedural advice as required.
- Support implementation of the new contractual arrangements.

33. Where can managers find guidance and updates?

The **Agency Worker User Guide** remains the primary source of guidance.

Managers should also monitor communications from:

- NICSHR Agency Worker Team (AWT)
- Department for Communities Contract Management Team (Lot 1)
- Departmental HR and Finance contacts

34. How long will the new contract last?

The contract will operate for an initial period of **three years**, with options to extend by:

- A further 2 years
- Another 2 years
- A final 1 year

This means the contract is anticipated to run until **October 2034**.

35. What is the key message for managers during the transition period?

- Review current assignments and confirm the ongoing business need for each worker.
- Prepare for transition arrangements, including the setup of new purchase orders (POs) for current workers where required.
- Continue to operate in line with existing guidance and established contract management processes.
- Avoid making any commitments or assurances to Agency Workers regarding future engagement or assignment extensions.
- Await formal transition instructions from NICSHR before taking any action outside normal contractual arrangements.
- Continue business as usual until further guidance is issued.

For questions not covered by the above, please contact the Agency Worker Team (AWT) at:

NICSHR.AgencyWorkersTeam@finance-ni.gov.uk

Or for DOJ/PPS business areas

nicshr.doj-ppsagencyworkersteam@justice-ni.gov.uk