



Department of

Finance

An Roinn

Airgeadais

www.finance-ni.gov.uk

People & Organisational Development
2-4 Bruce Street
BELFAST, BT2 7JD
Tel No: 028 90251884
E-mail: michele.woods@finance-ni.gov.uk

From: Michele Woods

To: Finance Directors

Date: 18 April 2024

Dear Departmental Finance Contacts

2023-24 Remuneration & Staff Report – HR policy narrative

1. I wrote to you on 25th March 2024 setting out the approach and timetable for co-ordinating HR information for inclusion in the Annual Report and Accounts.
2. FD (DoF) 03 24 Departmental Annual Reports and Accounts 2023-24 sets out guidance in relation to preparing departmental accounts for 2023-24 onwards and refers Finance Directors to the latest version of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM).
3. Chapter 6 of FReM provides guidance on the disclosure requirements for the Remuneration and Staff Report section of the Annual Report and Accounts and includes a requirement for disclosure in relation to a number of HR-related matters.
4. With the exception of health and safety at work, responsibility for HR-related matters including policy is a centralised function for the NI Civil Service, delivered by NICSHR and People & Organisational Development in the Department of Finance. To ensure consistency of disclosure across NICS departments, attached at Appendix A is a standard form of words for inclusion in your department's 2023-24 Remuneration and Staff Report section of the Annual Report and Accounts. Where appropriate, you may wish to add in additional employee-related matters specific to your organisation.
5. Please ensure this note is cascaded to other relevant bodies within your Department, such as Agencies, where they may fall under the umbrella of NICS HR policies.

FReM 6.5.1: Disclosure on pay policy

Remuneration Policy

The pay remit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, including senior civil servants (SCS), is normally approved by the Minister of Finance. Following the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's 27th April 2023 Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on the budget, the NI public sector pay policy guidance was published on 31st May 2023 in FD (DoF) 05/23. This was subsequently updated on 12th March 2024 in FD (DoF) 04/24 to reflect the return of Executive Ministers and revised departmental budgets.

Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The pay award for NICS non-industrial staff, including SCS, for 2023/24 has been finalised and is due to be paid in June 2024. The 2023/24 pay award for NICS industrial staff has also been finalised and is due to be paid in May 2024.

The pay of NICS staff is based on a system of pay scales for each grade, including SCS, containing a number of pay points from minimum to maximum, allowing progression towards the maximum based on performance.

Service Contracts

The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The [Recruitment Code](#) published by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland specifies the circumstances when appointments may be made by exception to merit.

Unless otherwise stated, the officials covered by this report hold appointments that are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in consideration of the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme¹.

FReM 6.5.44 (d): Sickness absence data

Sickness Absence

As you are aware the official validated annual sickness absence figure for 2023-24 is unlikely to be available in time for the inclusion in the annual report and accounts. As in previous years, it is recommended that Departments use the following approach:

The Department/ Agency had an overall sickness absence rate of *<Dept to insert relevant figure>* days lost per employee in 2022/23. Annual sickness absence figures can be found in the "Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2022/23" report at [Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2022/23 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#).

¹ [Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland \(nicscommissioners.org\)](https://www.nicscommissioners.org)

FReM 6.5.45 (g): Staff policies pertaining to disabled persons

Employment, training and advancement of disabled persons

The NICS is a lead partner of Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) and in 2023 was accredited as a [Disability Positive](#) employer.

The NICS delivers an annual programme of communications and training on disability awareness and understanding and has policies in place to support inclusive workplaces. A review of the NICS reasonable adjustment process for in-work support commenced in 2023 and a new reasonable adjustment policy and supporting resources is anticipated to launch during 2024. The NICS Disability Working Group, which includes representatives from the disability sector and colleagues with lived experience is a key stakeholder in the reasonable adjustment policy review.

The NICS is committed to the employment of disabled people and offers work experience for disabled people through the [NICS Work Experience Scheme for Disabled People](#) and annual participation in International Job Shadow Day (IJSJ).

To encourage job applications from disabled people, positive action advertising and targeted advertising alongside a programme of outreach are used. The NICS operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) which ensures a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. Further information can be found on the “Information for disabled applicants” section of the [NICS recruit website](#).

All selection panel members complete mandatory recruitment and selection training, and appointments to the NICS are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, adhering to the [Recruitment Code](#).

FReM 6.5.44 (i): Other employee matters

Learning & Development

The NICS recognises the importance of having skilled and engaged employees and continues to invest in learning and development.

Development and delivery of generic staff training is centralised in NICS². Training is delivered using a variety of learning delivery channels (including classroom delivery, on-line, and virtual classrooms), providing flexible access to learning. Coherent learning pathways are aligned to both corporate need and the NICS Competency Framework.

Talent management is a key theme and highlights the importance of the development conversation between managers and staff, with a number of resources available within a talent management toolkit.

² NICS² is the NICS’ centralised human resources operational delivery function, falling under the responsibility of the Department of Finance

The NICS offers a wide range of career development opportunities through mentoring, secondment and interchange opportunities, elective transfers, temporary promotion, job rotation and job shadowing.

Application of Business Appointment Rules (BARs)

The NICS Standards of Conduct Policy, (Section 8 and Annexes 4) sets out the rules on the acceptance of outside business appointments, employment or self-employment for staff after they leave the NI Civil Service, including procedures to make staff aware of these rules and provides that the Permanent Secretary of the Department is responsible for the effective operation of the Business Appointment Rules within their Department. Further detail is available in the [NICS Standards of Conduct Policy](#).

The Department must include a summary statement on their compliance with business appointment rules. Example statement (where the reporting entity is compliant):

“In compliance with Business Appointment rules, the Department is transparent in the advice given to individual applications for senior staff, including special advisers. Advice regarding specific business appointments has been published on [insert Department]’s website [insert link]”

Employee Consultation and Trade Union Relationships

The Department of Finance is responsible for the NICS Industrial Relations Policy. People & Organisational Development consults on HR policy with all recognised Trade Unions and local departmental arrangements are in place to enable consultation on matters specific to a department or individual business area.

Employee Engagement

Benchmark results of the 2023 NICS People Survey were published on 20 September 2023 and are available at [NICS People Survey Results | Department of Finance \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](#). The findings will be addressed and supported by Department and Division level initiatives to address local issues. The following wording should be used in the accounts:

When launching the 2023 NICS People Survey in April 2023, the Head of the Civil Service issued a message that the frequency of the Survey was changing from yearly to every other year to allow for proper targeting of actions, and so a People Survey is not due to take place in 2024.

The 2023 NICS People Survey is therefore the most recent survey and was conducted by NISRA across the nine NICS ministerial Departments as well as the Public Prosecution Service and the Health & Safety Executive for NI. All staff working in these organisations were invited to take part in the survey. For [Body Name] there were XXX (2021: XXX) permanent staff invited to complete the survey, of which XXX (2021: XXX) participated, a response rate of XX.X% (2021: XX%). The Employee Engagement Index (EEI) is the weighted average of the responses to the five employee engagement questions, and it ranges from 0% to 100%. [Body Name] responses indicated an Employee Engagement Index

of XX% (2021: XX%), compared to the NICS average of 54% (2021: 57%). The full survey can be accessed at <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/nics-people-survey-results>

FReM 6.5.45: Best Practice Disclosures – Diversity & Inclusion

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The NICS values and welcomes diversity and is committed to creating a truly inclusive workplace for all.

The NICS Diversity Champions Network includes senior colleagues as designated Diversity Champions for each of the nine NICS departments, as well as four thematic leads for gender, race and ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+. The network alongside the NICS corporate HR function, People and Organisational Development, develops and delivers an annual NICS Diversity Action Plan, which sets out priorities for action by diversity and inclusion theme and cross-cutting priorities.

Equality is a cornerstone consideration in the development and review of all HR policies which determine how staff are recruited and appointed, their terms and conditions, how they are managed and developed, assessed, recognised and rewarded. Further information is available in the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

As part of the NICS' efforts to ensure equality of opportunity, the NICS continually conducts comprehensive reviews into the composition of its workforce and recruitment activity, publishing a wide range of data. The statistics are available on the [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)'s website](#).

The NICS continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which includes submission of an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return and a tri-annual Article 55 Review to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), both of which assess the composition of the NICS workforce and the composition of applicants and appointees. Although not a statutory requirement, the NICS also conducts a similar formal review of the gender profile of its workforce. The findings from both tri-annual reviews are published in the NICS [Workforce Review](#)

The NICS uses the findings of all the equality monitoring and analysis to inform its programme of targeted outreach activity to address any areas of under-representation.

As a public authority, the NICS has due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in carrying out its functions. Further information on the department's equality scheme is available on its website [*insert relevant departmental web address – see list below*]

[Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#)

[Department for Communities](#)

[Department for the Economy](#)

[Department for Education](#)

[Department of Finance](#)

[Department of Health](#)
[Department for Infrastructure](#)
[Department of Justice](#)
[The Executive Office](#)