



An Coimisiún um Cheapacháin Seirbhíse Poiblí
Commission for Public Service Appointments

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



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OUR MISSION

That appointments to public bodies are made in accordance with the principles of probity, merit, fairness and openness and are in line with best practice.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION



Mr. Martin Fraser, Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach and Secretary General to the Government

Mr. Peter Tyndall, Ombudsman and Information Commissioner

Mr. Seán Ó'Fearghail T.D., An Ceann Comhairle

Mr. Justice Daniel O'Keeffe, Chairman, Standards in Public Office Commission

Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

“One of the Commission’s key objectives is to engender a high level of confidence in public sector appointments processes. It is anxious that these processes exemplify the principles of probity, merit, best practice, fairness and transparency.”

The background of the page is a solid teal-green color. In the lower half, there is a complex graphic design consisting of several overlapping circles in various shades of green and blue. A series of thin, yellow, curved lines sweep across the bottom of the page, creating a sense of motion and depth. The text is positioned in the upper right quadrant, set against a lighter, semi-transparent circular area.

INTRODUCTION

2016 marked the Commission's 12th full year in operation as regulator of recruitment and selection to positions in the Civil Service, An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive, the Health Information and Quality Authority and a number of other public service bodies.

One of the Commission's key objectives is to engender a high level of confidence in public sector appointments processes. It is anxious that these processes exemplify the principles of probity, merit, best practice, fairness and transparency. The Commission is committed to ensuring that these core principles achieve the goal of attracting and selecting the strongest possible candidates, thus facilitating the delivery of efficient and effective public services.

The Commission has a significant role to play in underpinning trust in those persons appointed to fill positions by promoting confidence in the system of appointments. The processes through which people are recruited and selected to positions in public bodies are key to ensuring that the most competent candidates are appointed, thereby enhancing trust and confidence in the institutions of the State.

In carrying out its brief, the Commission publishes Codes of Practice for recruitment and selection to positions in public sector organisations. It monitors the performance of office holders under its remit on their adherence to the Codes through regular monitoring and auditing. It examines complaints from individuals who consider that a recruiter has breached the principles in the Code in the course of an appointment process. Finally it provides guidance and advice to Office Holders to support them in meeting the standards set out in Codes.

The Commission again had a busy year investigating complaints from individuals dissatisfied with the manner in which appointment processes were managed, examining requests from Civil Service organisations to engage a number of staff on short term contracts outside of normal merit based recruitment arrangements and completing own initiative reviews of appointment processes in public service organisations.

The Commission is satisfied that the audit and complaint investigation functions, developed since its establishment, have proven robust and effective mechanisms for ensuring that appointments to positions within its remit are made on merit, following a fair, open, and competitive process. The Commission is happy to note that public service recruitment and selection practices are, in the main, being conducted in line with the standards established in its Codes of Practice and that the values and principles defining merit are being respected.

The Commission also wishes to express its gratitude to its Secretariat and support staff in the Information Technology, Corporate Services and Communications units of the Office of the Ombudsman for their hard work over this past year.

CODES OF PRACTICE

One of the Commission's primary functions is to establish and safeguard the standards to be observed by those responsible for the appointments process in each of the public bodies within its remit. In so doing, the Commission must ensure public confidence in appointment processes that are open, fair, inclusive and, above all, firmly based on merit. The standards established by the Commission are published as Codes of Practice.

The Codes also set out the procedures which those responsible for the appointments process must follow when handling complaints and grievances brought by candidates. There are specific procedures for complaints in relation to a decision affecting a candidate's participation in the appointments process and separate procedures for an allegation of a breach of the Code.

The current codes of practice in operation during 2016¹ were:

- Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service (No. 01/07)
- Emergency Short-Term Appointments to Positions in the Health Service Executive (No. 02/07)
- Appointment of Persons with Disabilities to Positions in the Civil Service and Certain Public Bodies (No. 03/07)
- Atypical Appointments to Positions in the Civil Service and Certain Public Bodies (No. 04/07)
- Appointment to Positions Where the Garda Commissioner has Statutory Responsibilities (No. 01/09)

The Codes reflect the Commission's intent that all appointments processes are conducted with integrity and that decisions are always made on the basis of merit. They offer guidance rather than prescriptive instructions to those who will operate them. This enables recruiters to adopt a flexible and innovative approach to recruitment procedures without compromising the principles of integrity and merit.

The standards that the Commission has established are fundamental to ensuring a recruitment system that is genuinely open to values such as fairness, equality and respect for diversity, as well as meeting the professional imperatives of efficiency and effectiveness. As part of its ongoing commitment to quality assurance, the Commission acknowledges that these standards must be reviewed from time to time, and revised where necessary, to remain relevant.

¹ The Commission published updated Codes of Practice in March 2017

It engaged with a number of Public Service Bodies during 2016 and reflected on feedback from candidates with a view to updating the Codes. The Commission will continue to take account of feedback from organisations within its remit and other interested parties, insight gained through audit work and the general flow of queries from departments, offices and other public bodies.

SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

The Commission is responsible for ensuring that appointments to public service bodies within remit are made as a result of competitive merit-based appointment processes, in accordance with the standards set out in the Codes of Practice. Each year, since its establishment in 2004, the Commission agrees an annual audit plan to monitor and review recruitment and selection practices by organisations within remit across the public service to ensure compliance with the requirements under the Public Service Management Act 2004.

The Commission, through its audit function, has established a continuing programme for reviewing recruitment and selection practices within Departments/Offices. Over the past decade this ongoing review process has noted that there is generally a high level of compliance with the principles of probity, merit, best practice, fairness and transparency with the majority of appointment processes reviewed, meeting both the letter and the spirit of the Codes of Practice. The Commission has consistently noted a genuine commitment among public bodies to achieve and maintain high standards in recruitment to the public service by selecting and appointing candidates on the basis of merit and through open and competitive processes.

During 2016 the Commission received 47 requests for review under Section 8 of the Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service which provided an opportunity to examine recruitment and selection practices across a number of organisations. Any areas for improvement identified during such a review were discussed with the body concerned with a view to improving procedures in line with the principles set out in the Code. The Commission, through follow-up on the implementation of recommendations, is satisfied that any issues arising were addressed by the organisation concerned.

In addition to the examination of these complaints the Commission completed an audit of appointment processes for positions in the HSE managed locally by the University Hospital Waterford and University Hospital Limerick.

The audit focussed on a sample of appointment processes conducted during 2015 in University Hospital Waterford and University Hospital Limerick and entailed an examination of the competition file for each of the processes selected, together with meetings and discussions with key personnel in the HR Departments of both Hospitals who have responsibility for the management of recruitment and selection within each Hospital Group.

The Commission's report notes that:

- The HSE's National Recruitment Service (NRS) is responsible for the delivery of recruitment services for the HSE
- Due to the volume of appointments across all services in the HSE, it is not possible for the NRS to respond to all of the HSE's recruitment needs in the timelines required
- The HSE has introduced arrangements to permit the devolution of recruitment activity to local HR or the local Service Managers and that guidelines are available for local managers

The report noted some shortcomings in practices and procedures employed and made recommendations to ensure all appointments to the HSE are made in line with the Code's principles and standards.

Recommendations

- The Commission considers there ought to be stronger governance arrangements in place to monitor and control the recruitment, selection and employment of staff in each hospital group so that the HSE can be satisfied that it is meeting the terms of its recruitment licence. While recognising the needs for and benefits of devolving recruitment, the Commission would like to emphasise that the HSE has a responsibility to implement effective monitoring and controlling of its local recruitment and selection activity.*
- The Commission considers that the HSE must act immediately to end the practice of confining competitions to those who have submitted unsolicited CVs particularly as very few potential candidates will know that this practice is being pursued let alone know how they might express an interest in one of these positions. It believes that this practice not only undermines selection on merit, it leaves the HSE open to charges of nepotism.*

Notwithstanding the concerns of local HR Managers that advertising temporary vacancies may generate considerable work in terms of managing recruitment processes, the Commission wishes to remind the HSE that it is obliged to deploy effective marketing efforts to ensure that its recruitment is from the widest pool of available talent.

iii. In the interest of ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of candidates in the recruitment process the Commission recommends that:-

- All appointment processes are supported by clear, concise and effective marketing designed to target an appropriate applicant field
- Standard job specifications/role profiles used for all posts
- The HSE sets protocols for selecting, training and briefing selection board members
- Application of pre-determined job related selection criteria to assess candidates at all stages of the competition
- Processes for capturing and providing feedback are established and applied
- Robust candidate vetting to ensure that only eligible candidates are selected
- Information on the CPISA's Section 7 and Section 8 review procedures available to all candidates

iv. The Commission recommends greater input and direction from National HR to all areas involved in the recruitment and selection of staff into the HSE to ensure tighter controls and a more co-ordinated approach to HSE appointments nationally. This would also help to ensure a robust, transparent and consistent approach to the appointments processes employed across the HSE.

The Commission recommends that those involved in recruitment at local level receive training as a priority covering all aspects of the appointment process including an overview of the common errors in the assessment and evaluation of candidates, best practice recruitment and selection, and advice on the implementation of the relevant Guidance Notes and Guidelines that are available from the NRS. All recruitment staff must be reminded that all appointments, both temporary and permanent, must be made on foot of a transparent, fair, competitive merit-based appointment process in accordance with the Commission's Codes of Practice.

In addition to the provision of training to those involved in recruitment and selection the Commission recommends that communication with all Hospital Groups within the HSE is reviewed to ensure relevant and up-to-date information on national policy and procedures is shared with the relevant personnel in a timely manner.

While the findings in its report contained a number of critical comments on the recruitment standards applied by the two recruitment teams, the Commission was pleased to note that the HSE accepted its recommendations and established an appropriate programme of actions to address the shortcomings identified.

Review and Evaluation

This and all other Audit Reports are published on the Commission's website – www.cpsa.ie – and can be used by Office Holders as a tool to benchmark their own policies and practices. It is important that the public service body addresses any shortcomings identified and the Commission will continue to monitor how its recommendations are implemented.

The Commission acknowledges the continued assistance and co-operation it receives from all organisations within remit. While recognising that these organisations have many competing pressures, the Commission's view is that the benefits of internal reviews of appointment processes by the bodies concerned warrant consideration. Taking this further, the Commission urges the use of periodic internal auditing of recruitment and selection policies and practices as part of each organisation's risk management process.

COMPLAINTS/REQUESTS FOR REVIEW

The management of complaints both formal and informal was, once again, a significant feature of the Commission's workload during the year.

The Commission has noted an increase both in the numbers of general inquiries and the level of complaints it has received in recent years. It believes that the increase in complaints reflects a loosening of the recruitment moratorium and the subsequent increase in recruitment activity rather than any diminution of standards.

Following its examination of these complaints, the Commission is broadly satisfied that there is a genuine commitment among Office Holders to achieve and maintain high standards in how they select and appoint candidates to positions.

The Commission received 47 complaints under Section 8 of the Code of Practice in 2016 in comparison to the total of 41 it received in 2015. It examined 45 complaints in 2016 and one complaint was withdrawn.

The table below provides a breakdown of the complaints considered by the Commission in 2016.

Organisations	Complaints
HSE	16
PAS	12
Irish Prison Service	16
Houses of the Oireachtas Service	1

While many of these complaints were made against the HSE and PAS, the Commission is satisfied that the number of complaints against both is relatively small in comparison to the overall number of candidates and the number of appointments made by these bodies. It also noted that 15 of the complaints it considered in relation to the Irish Prison Service related to one appointment process.

The Commission's examination of complaints involves a detailed review of the records of the appointment process and, where appropriate, meetings with relevant personnel. In dealing with a complaint, the Commission's remit is to address and respond to the complainant's allegations of breaches of the Code's principles.

On foot of its examination of 45 complaints, the Commission was broadly satisfied that the Office Holders concerned were applying appropriate measures to ensure that they complied with their responsibilities and obligations prescribed in the Codes of Practice.

A summary of some key themes and cases in 2016 is provided below:-

1. Complaint in relation to the appointment process for Assistant Chief Officer in the Irish Prison Service (IPS)

The CPSA received correspondence from 15 individuals complaining about the IPS's management of a selection process for the grade of Assistant Chief Officer.

The appointment process involved all 392 applicants for the position being invited to attend for preliminary interview by one of 4 separate interview boards. Following an evaluation of candidates at this preliminary interview, the top 20 candidates before each interview board were invited to attend for main interview.

The Complainants expressed concerns in relation to:-

- The fairness and consistency of the preliminary boards
- The manner in which the boards questioned and scored some of the competencies
- The decision to bring forward the top 20 candidates from each selection board
- The quality and nature of the feedback

The Commission acknowledged the safeguards used by the Irish Prison Service to ensure that candidates were evaluated in an objective manner; on merit, and in a fair and consistent fashion. It also noted how the IPS has applied the lessons of previous reviews of appointment processes by the CPSA.

In its report, the Commission noted that the IPS:-

- Engaged a recruitment specialist to provide expert advice on the conduct of the process (including measures to support consistency in approach between selection boards) and to brief the selection board
- Put considerable time and effort into not only selecting credible and expert selection board members but also into training and briefing the members of the selection boards in advance of the interviews
- Collated the scores of the different interview boards and shared these scores between the boards
- Randomly assigned experienced HR staff to the different interview boards for interviews to support the interview boards in delivering a consistent approach to the questioning and evaluation of candidates

The Commission also acknowledged that recruitment and selection processes are time consuming and resource intensive. It recognises the challenge involved in interviewing 392 candidates in a fair and consistent fashion and also in determining which of those candidates merit further consideration. The Commission recommended that the IPS explore how it might introduce job related screening methodologies with a view to reducing the need to invite such large numbers to interview.

While noting the challenges involved in applying objective and consistent interviews for such a large candidate pool, the Commission concluded that the IPS had robust systems in place and that its actions in managing the preliminary interview stage were in line with best practice for such processes.

2. Allegations that the members of the selection board did not have the knowledge, skills or experience to evaluate the candidates for a role.

The Commission received complaints about an Office Holder's decisions in relation to the membership of a selection board. The Complainants considered that the selection board did not have the knowledge, experience or training to assess candidates' suitability for the specific post. They also took issue with the manner in which the selection board was trained and briefed for shortlisting and interviewing candidates for a senior, specialised role.

The Commission noted that the Office Holder had convened a three-person selection board comprising two senior staff members and one external expert. The Office Holder provided the Commission with background information on the two employees it had chosen to sit on the interview board, and a brief résumé of the external selection board member. It also provided the Commission with the documentation it used to prepare the selection board for its work including the guidance proffered to the board in advance of the shortlisting process. Based on the information provided, the Commission was broadly satisfied that the Office Holder had taken appropriate care and attention in choosing selection board members with a good knowledge of the requirements of the post. It was also satisfied that the Recruiting Organisation had taken appropriate steps in briefing the selection board members on the approach to adopt in their conduct of the selection process.

However, the Commission noted that, because of the very senior and specialised nature of the position, only a very limited number of the Office Holder's employees could possibly sit on the interview board.

It recognises that Office Holders will face challenges in securing sufficiently expert internal board members at such senior levels, particularly when filling positions in highly specialised areas. In this case, it recommended that the Office Holder explore the options available to it in selecting board members for similar posts in the future, including changing the mix of internal and external board members.

3. Allegations that the decision of the selection board was not based on objective criteria but instead reflected (i) a bias on the part of the members of the selection board (ii) a determination to appoint external candidates so that the Office Holder did not have to initiate a new appointment process to fill the internal vacancy.

During 2016 the Commission considered complaints from four candidates for two separate processes who believed that they were more deserving of appointment than the candidates ultimately appointed. One of the candidates argued that a member of the selection board should have excused himself from the process on the basis that he could not have been impartial or objective in his assessment as they had had a rather heated argument some years previously. The other candidates – who were employees of the Office Holder in question - argued that the Office holder was inclined to make an external appointment from the outset as it would have been too inconvenient to run an consequential appointment process had one of them been appointed. The complainants also expressed concern at the inclusion of their head of unit on the selection board. The appointment processes in question were for professional and technical roles and involved quite limited numbers of candidates.

In both cases, the Commission acknowledged that it was extremely difficult to avoid connections between candidates and board members particularly for professional and technical roles where there tended to be quite limited options in terms of selecting board members. It also acknowledged that it is not unusual to include the line manager responsible for the performance of a particular unit on the selection board for positions in his/her unit. It examined the safeguards the Office Holder had in place to support an objective, job related, merit based assessment of the candidates as well as the specific steps in place to manage the risks associated with connections between candidates and board members. It noted that, in both cases:-

- The Chairperson on the selection board was external to the Office;
- The documentation provided to the board stressed the need for and gave guidance on basing decisions on the evidence presented in the course of the selection process;
- Selection board members were advised to declare the extent of any connections they had with any of the candidates;
- Where connections existed, other members of the board were encouraged to lead discussions on specific candidates.

On the basis of its examination of the complaints, the Commission was satisfied that the Office Holders did have sufficient safeguards in place and the complaints were not upheld. It found that the Office Holder had not acted inappropriately in including on the selection board the board member who had had the heated argument with the candidate some years previously.

The Commission also noted that, apart from their own belief that the Office Holder was predisposed to making an external appointment, the three candidates did not provide any evidence to support their allegation. Accordingly the Commission considered that these allegations were, at best, speculation on the part of the Complainants or unsubstantiated assertions. It determined that these allegations did not merit further consideration. Furthermore it informed the Complainants that it considered the submission of unsupported allegations did not reflect particularly well on the complainants and that they should be mindful of their own conduct. It went on to say that complainants should avoid making unfair or unsubstantiated allegations particularly where their allegations suggest or infer a lack of integrity on the part of those involved in the conduct of the process.

4. Complaints about shortlisting

During 2016, the Commission continued to receive complaints in relation to the manner in which selection boards evaluate candidates in the course of a shortlisting process.

Among the issues raised by Complaints have been:-

- The selection criteria employed by the selection did not sufficiently reflect the nature of the role
- The selection board was unfair and inconsistent in its decision making and did not give adequate attention to the content of a candidate's application
- The scores awarded by the selection board did not reflect the candidate's skills
- The feedback provided did not properly explain the decision reached
- Rather than reviewing the candidate's application in light of the objective criteria, the selection board benchmarked the application against other candidates
- There were no objective metrics available to support the manner in which the selection board carried out its evaluation of candidates

In reviewing these and other complaints, the Commission examined the suite of safeguards used by the Office Holders to support the fair, consistent and objective evaluation of candidates.

i. Job and Person Specification

The Commission considers that an appropriately prepared job description and person specification are key to the conduct of every appointment process. It expects that all Office Holders will have sufficiently robust job descriptions and person specifications which clearly identify the duties and responsibilities of the role as well as the knowledge, experience, skills and personal attributes required. The candidate appointed to the role can expect to be tested against the job and person specifications during the course of an appointment process.

In examining complaints, the Commission generally asks the Office Holder to provide details on (i) when and how the job description and person specification were prepared, (ii) whether it has been reviewed and updated recently and (iii) how the job and person specifications were considered and approved within the employing organisation. The Commission is particularly concerned that the job description and person specifications have been signed off at an appropriately senior level. It also wishes to ensure that (iv) the person specification is not unnecessarily restrictive and that does not exclude candidates capable of performing the duties of the role.

The Commission was generally satisfied that Office Holders were taking appropriate care has been taken in defining the role.

ii. Selection Criteria

The Commission recognises that it can be challenging to evaluate candidates against all of the different elements of the job and person specification. Particularly when shortlisting from large volumes of candidates, the selection board must be able to focus on how candidates have demonstrated their abilities in a number of key criteria. That said the Commission expects that the shortlisting criteria are sufficiently clear so that they provide a robust means for differentiating between those candidates most likely to make a success of the role and those who are less suited to the position.

In reviewing the selection criteria used at the shortlisting stage, the Commission checked that they corresponded with key elements of the job description and person specification.

The Commission expected that the recruiting organisation would prepare and present draft criteria to the selection board. It recognises that, in some cases, the selection board will make some adjustments to those criteria following their preliminary discussions about the demands of the role.

The Commission is firmly of the view that the public interest is best served when recruiters apply fair and objective criteria that permit the selection of the best candidates from the widest pool of available talent.

While broadly satisfied with the manner in which Office Holders have prepared and applied the shortlisting criteria, it found reason to take issue with an Office Holder as one of its selection boards decided to disregard a key element of the shortlisting criteria that corresponded with the published person specification and instead decided to apply criteria of its own.

iii. Membership of the Selection Board

Given the significant responsibility on the selection board, it is imperative that Office Holders takes care in selecting individuals with the knowledge, experience and judgement to evaluate candidates for the role. In examining the membership of the selection board, the Commission considered the measures taken to ensure that, as a collective, the board had the appropriate background, including any relevant qualifications to test and evaluate candidates on the knowledge and skill areas required for the role.

iv. Management of Connections between Board Members and Candidates:-

The Commission accepts that it can be extremely challenging to avoid connections between board members and candidates particularly for senior and/or specialist roles where there tends to be a limited pool of sufficiently expert board members available. Instead of trying to avoid these almost inevitable situations, the Commission looks to see what steps the Office Holder has taken to manage these situations. Apart from the general instructions in relation to treating all candidates in a fair and consistent fashion and evaluating them based on the evidence presented in the course of the appointment process, it expects that the Office Holder will instruct its members of the selection board to make it known to their colleagues on the board which of the candidates s/he knows. While the board will interview all candidates in a consistent fashion, the board members who know candidates will be the last to offer a view on the interview performance of the candidate in question. It also looks to see if this procedure was properly documented in the interview guide issued to Board Members and referred to in the pre-interview briefing.

However in certain cases, the Commission proposed that Office Holders should consider retaining a schedule setting out which board members declared their knowledge of which candidate and confirming that the standard protocol referred to in its Interview Guide had been followed.

v. Selection Process

The Commission will expect that the Recruiting Organisation will plan the appointment process in advance. This plan ought to have taken account of the numbers of candidates that are likely to apply and whether a preliminary screening or shortlisting stage will be necessary.

Where shortlisting is used, the Commission expects that the Recruiting Organisation will consider how it will provide for a fair and consistent evaluation of candidates.

While candidates are often asked to include a CV in support of their application form, many Public Service recruiters also deploy a structured application form where candidates are asked to highlight the areas in their career to date where they have demonstrated the key criteria.

Recruiting Bodies have regularly informed the Commission that applications are sent out to the selection board some days in advance of the shortlisting meeting along with the job and person specification, a shortlisting criteria and a briefing on how the selection process will be conducted. The Commission understands that Selection Board Members are asked to study the application forms in advance so that they are prepared for the shortlisting meeting.

The Commission understands that, where shortlisting board members have been provided with and have studied the applications in advance of the shortlisting meeting, they can often segregate candidates quite quickly into categories such as “most likely to attain a competitive standard at interview” ; “most unlikely to attain a competitive standard at interview” and “worthy of further deliberation”. It also understands that the discussions at the shortlisting meetings focus in particular on those applications in this third category.

As well as reviewing the applications of candidates in this third category, members of the selection boards will need to spend time assessing applications where there was not a consensus in their decision on the basis of their initial review.

Notwithstanding which category the candidate features in, the Commission considers that as candidates have gone to the time and trouble of preparing and submitting an application, they deserve to have their applications properly evaluated. As such the Commission considers that clear and meaningful feedback should be available to all candidates which shows that their application was evaluated by the board and which of the criteria they did not demonstrate to the same standard those candidates invited to the next stage of the appointment process. In line with the separate case note on feedback, the Commission expects that Office Holders will provide feedback that explains the decision reached in an appointment process but does not require the Office Holder to provide career development advice.

Finally the Commission accepts that the numbers of candidates invited to attend for interview will reflect not only the performance of candidates in relation to the criteria but also the overall strength of the candidate pool. As shortlisting is often a competitive process, it understands that applications will be compared not only against the selection criteria but also against applications from other candidates.

vi. Marking Scheme

The Commission accepts that it can be challenging to apply precise empirical measures when evaluating a candidate’s written application. However it considers that the use of a marking scheme can be helpful not only in showing candidates how their application was evaluated by the selection board but also in encouraging selection boards to apply a high level of discipline and rigour during their evaluation of candidates.

LICENSING

The Commission is responsible for granting recruitment licences to certain public service bodies who wish to conduct their own recruitment. Recruitment licences may be granted either in respect of all positions in the public body (a general licence) or in relation to one or more particular positions (a specific licence).

An application for a recruitment licence must be made to the Commission in which the office holder is required to demonstrate its capability to carry out the selection process in line with the Commission's code of practice. The Commission is available to provide appropriate advice or assistance during the application process.

Each licence granted has certain terms and conditions attached which must be strictly adhered to by the licence holder. The Commission monitors compliance with the terms and conditions of a recruitment licence through its audit function. Although a recruitment licence is not time-limited the Commission has the power to terminate a licence in certain circumstances. This power has not been invoked to date.

During 2016 the Commission granted a general recruitment licence to the following:-

- The Policing Authority
- The Adoption Authority
- The Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Commission had granted 34 recruitment licences to Office Holders to the end of 2016 – this includes both general and specific licences. In some instances Office Holders hold both types of recruitment licence.

EXCLUDED POSITIONS

The Commission is empowered under Section 8 of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004 to exclude, by Order, unestablished positions in the Civil Service from the operation of the Act.

In agreeing to exclude these positions from its remit, the Commission requires that the Civil Service Office or Department adheres to guidelines setting out the nature of positions it will exempt and also the length of time that will apply.

Table 1 sets out the principal appointment categories for which such Orders were made or extended in 2016.

Table 1: Excluding Orders Made in 2016	
Category	Number of Orders
Student/graduate placement programmes (including Internships)	25
WAM projects (including extensions)	19
Ministerial private staff	32
Appointments where specific skills were required for time limited periods	10
Engagement of retired staff members (specific skills)	1
Total	87

Each Order relates to a specific type of position or grade in the Civil Service. The number of orders granted does not reflect the number of persons appointed as more than one person may have been appointed to the position or grade in question.

In the case of Order relating to Ministerial Private Staff, the conditions of service of the appointees provide that they will cease to hold their positions when the Government or Minister leaves office.

44 Orders were granted to support specific short-term initiatives, i.e. student placement programmes and WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) projects. The remaining 11 Orders enabled the engagement of staff to short term appointments where time scales involved did not allow for the running of an open competitive selection process.

MEMBERS OF THE SECRETARIAT



Andrew Patterson, Secretary to the Commission for Public Service Appointments
Maire Ni Fhiachain, Assistant Principal
Amanda Duffy, Higher Executive Officer
Anthony Shannon, Executive Officer

