



An Coimisiún um Cheapacháin Seirbhíse Poiblí
Commission for Public Service Appointments

Strategy Statement

2020 - 2023

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Introduction

As the Commission for Public Service Appointments, we are the principal regulator of recruitment and selection in the public service. Our goal is to make sure appointments to the civil and public service are carried out fairly and transparently.

This statement represents the sixth review of our strategic objectives and sets out the key objectives for the Commission over the next three years. The plan has a clear vision for the office and a number of strategic objectives, underpinned by core values.

The last three years saw considerable turnover in staff of our office and an increase in the number of complaints received. Considerable focus was therefore placed on strengthening resources, building expertise internally and introducing revised processes to carry out our work effectively.

While this strategy builds closely on our achievements over the last three years, it expands its focus to enhancing public awareness of the Commission and strengthening the expertise and understanding within public bodies to carry out fair recruitment and selection.

The strategy will be supported by detailed annual business plans. It is also flexible to allow us to deal with any organisational changes arising.

The Commission

The Commission was set up in 2004 under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004. Our current members are:

- Mr Seán Ó Feargháil TD, Ceann Comhairle
- Peter Tyndall, Ombudsman
- Martin Fraser, Secretary General to the Government
- David Moloney, acting Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- Garrett Sheehan, Chairperson of the Standards in Public Office Commission (post currently vacant)

A team led by Commission Director Elaine Cassidy and Secretary Sean Garvey supports the work of the Commission. The Office of the Ombudsman also provides shared services in areas such as human resources, financial management and information and communications technology.

Our role

The Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act, 2004 provides the regulatory framework for fair, transparent and merit-based selection in the public service. It applies to the positions outlined below.

- The Civil Service
- An Garda Síochána (up to sergeant and inspector grade)
- Local authority positions to which the Local Authorities Act 1926 applies
- The Health Service Executive
- Public bodies where the appointment must be made under the Act

Our role is to make sure any appointments made to these positions are done so fairly, transparently, consistently and on the basis of merit. Our key responsibilities include:

- Setting out and promoting good recruitment practice
- Publishing codes of practice
- Issuing recruitment licences
- Outlining how to review and appeal an appointment
- Examining complaints about alleged breaches of the codes
- Ensuring public bodies comply with the codes
- Auditing recruitment and selection at public bodies
- Helping and guiding public bodies

Vision and values

Our vision is that appointments to positions in the civil and public service will be made fairly, transparently and consistently, and only in line with best practice.

In carrying out our vision, we promote and adhere to the following principles:

- Probity
- Merit
- Best practice
- Consistency
- Transparency

In carrying out our day-to-day work, staff of the Commission also adhere to a number of key organisational values. These are applied in decisions and actions taken as well as policies and processes in place for carrying out its functions. These are:

- Independence – To examine complaints, conduct reviews, consider applications and make decisions in a fair, objective and impartial manner.
- Customer focus – To aim for excellence and professionalism in the delivery of our services. To meet defined standards and continuously review our performance to ensure that the customer remains at the heart of everything we do.
- Fairness – To treat all people with respect, dignity and fairness. This is fundamental to our relationships with all of our stakeholders. It also contributes to a work environment that promotes engagement, openness and transparency.
- Empathy – To understand that our customers often come to us having exhausted all avenues open to them. To understand that public bodies rely on us for clarity and support. To listen carefully to our customers, understanding and have sensitivity to their concerns.
- Innovation – To deliver continuous performance improvements and avail of best practice methods for delivering a first class service, and in doing so promote confidence in public service delivery.

Strategic objectives

For us to achieve our vision over the next three years, the following high-level objectives will act as primary enablers:

- To drive and influence improvements in public service recruitment
- To enable and support public bodies in achieving and maintaining best practice
- To strengthen organisational capacity to provide an effective and efficient service to stakeholders
- To enhance public awareness of our role and access to our services

In order to achieve these objectives, we have identified the following key actions:

1. Drive and influence improvements

- Conduct properly planned, focused and fit-for-purpose audits where consistent poor recruitment practice occurs and where constructive engagement with recruiters has not resulted in such poor practice being addressed.
- Publish reports of our audit findings, outlining our position on best practice and serving as a learning tool for other public bodies
- Actively follow-up on breaches of the codes identified through complaint mechanisms and work with public bodies to ensure they do not reoccur
- Actively engage and consult with public bodies on how they can facilitate best practice in recruitment and selection
- Provide clear and comprehensive guidance and advice to all stakeholders

2. Enable and support best practice

- Publish new codes of practice outlining revised procedures and providing greater clarification on their application
- Issue a suite of guidance material to accompany the codes and their application in order to assist public bodies in carrying out their role
- Publish casebooks outlining key decisions made by the Commission, highlighting precedents and lessons learned
- Ensure that public bodies are fully aware of their obligations under the Act and have a full understanding of the principles and standards outlined in the codes

3. Strengthen organisational capacity

- Continue to implement revised internal processes for the examination of complaints
- Continue to implement effective case management systems for each of our functions
- Continue to enhance our knowledge management processes
- Continue to ensure ongoing training and development of all staff members

4. Enhance public awareness

- Maintain and promote a modern up-to-date website as the primary information source for fair, merit-based selection
- Engage in outreach to both public bodies and candidates in order to ensure clear understanding of complaint mechanisms available
- Promote new codes of practice and a suite of accompanying guidance material as tools to assist public bodies in carrying out their role
- Explore additional opportunities to publish and promote key findings and recommendations

Next steps

This statement will be supported by detailed annual business plans which will reflect our strategic objectives and key actions. These will be supported by individual staff action plans and a risk register. They will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis against quantifiable and time-bound performance indicators.

Reporting on progress on the objectives set out in this statement will be done regularly, both internally and externally, through a variety of mechanisms. This will include annual reports, staff meetings and minutes of meetings.