



Northern Ireland

Public Services

Ombudsman

Administrative Officer
Corporate Services

Permanent Role

Applicant Pack

NIPSO/CSAO/01/24

Contents

Prior to completion of the application form candidates should familiarise themselves with the contents of this pack.

The pack includes:-

- Section A – Background to the NIPSO Office
- Section B – Job Description
- Section C – Person Specification
- Section D – The Application and Selection Process
- Section E – The Terms & Conditions of Employment
- Section F – Other Benefits of Working for NIPSO
- Section G – Strategic Plan

Section A - Background to the NIPSO Office

The Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) was established in April 2016. This was in accordance with the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (“the Act”).

The Act replaced and extended the remit of the previous offices of Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints. It has improved public access to redress, strengthened the powers of investigation, enhanced public interest reporting and increased the Office’s visibility and profile.

The Act may be accessed [here](#). The main functions of the office are:

1. To consider complaints about the majority of public services in Northern Ireland after the complaint has been considered by the public body. This includes health and social care, central government, local government, housing and education including schools;
2. To make recommendations to provide individual redress as well as recommendations to bring about systemic improvement;
3. To bring about a simple standardised process for handling complaints in the public sector focused on resolution and learning from complaints;
4. To conduct investigations into wider systemic issues to bring about systemic improvement or address systemic injustice without the need for a complaint;
5. To publish our reports and decisions and prepare and share insights to bring about wider learning and improvement from complaints and investigations;
6. To use the outcomes from our work to engage effectively and influence positive change in public services and public policy;
7. To perform the role of Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Ombudsman.

Funding for NIPSO is approved by the Audit Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The NIPSO budget for 2023/24 is anticipated to be approximately £4 Million.

Local Government Commissioner for Standards

In addition to the above functions the Ombudsman is also the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards. This role involves promoting the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors, both investigating and where appropriate adjudicating on complaints that a Councillor has breached the Code. The investigation and adjudication functions are separated by an ethical wall to ensure procedural fairness. In addition to investigation and adjudication, engagement with Councillors and their representative bodies is an important aspect of the function. The delivery of training on and improving awareness of the Code of Conduct for Councillors with local Councils and the Councillor community to improve understanding of the Code and improve standards is an essential aspect of the work. The funding for this aspect of the work is provided by local Councils through the Department for Communities and is included in the overall NIPSO budget.

Section B – Job Description

Post: Administrative Officer Corporate Services

Responsible to: Finance & Corporate Services Manager

Grade: Administrative Officer

Salary: £23,071 - £24,507 p.a.

Location: Belfast

Main purpose of job

The provision of efficient, timely, accurate and confidential administrative support to the Finance and Corporate Services functions as well as to the wider Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. This is to include administrative support where the Office requires external Independent Professional Advice (IPA) in the course of completing complaints investigations.

Summary of principal duties and responsibilities:

Finance

- Administer financial procedures and policies, for example, processing purchase orders/invoices, reconciling bank, VAT and nominal ledger accounts, resolving invoice queries, maintaining prompt payment performance information, booking courses, travel, postage & courier services, ordering stationery, processing expenses and raising of organisation purchase orders;
- Contribute to reports on financial performance against targets and the production and distribution of monthly and annual operational performance information, e.g. 10 day prompt payment;
- Undertake data collection, input and analysis in line with established procedures and quality standards and using appropriate technology, e.g. financial data such as nominal code activity against spend.

IPA Administration

- Action IPA requests including the issue of contracts of engagement to advisors. Ensure return of Contracts and notify Investigating Officer (IO) of acceptance;
- Destruction of advice packages in line with documented procedures;
- Maintain and monitor the dedicated Office email account for Clinical Advice, supporting the provision and return of the information to and from the IPA;
- Maintain, track and update the IPA contracts database; issuing reminders to IPA's where necessary;
- Liaise with IOs and IPAs on contract matters including; payment of fees, termination of contracts, maintaining performance information records in relation to the IPA service.
- Assist in the procurement of Independent Social Work Advice when required;

Corporate Performance and Reporting

- Respond to internal and external enquiries - providing information where required, e.g. general matters to include finance, premises, IT, suppliers, contractors;
- Assist in the co-ordination of contract management procedures.

General Administration Support

- Book and prepare meeting rooms and ensure that facilities and equipment are available and maintained to a high standard;
- Maintain effective relationships with internal and external contacts, for example suppliers, internal directorates and teams;
- General administrative duties—shredding, photocopying, accepting deliveries; maintaining stationery inventory;
- Undertake any other Corporate Services duties appropriate to grade and as directed by line management.

General Responsibilities & Duties

- Adhere to and promote the Office policies on Equality of Opportunity and Dignity at Work, demonstrating a commitment to the principles of equality, fairness and diversity in all aspects of work;
- Take responsibility for the development of own skills and knowledge through proactive engagement in the internal performance review processes; and
- Undertake ad-hoc, cross-functional project work supporting the development of the Office and service provision as reasonably requested by your line manager.

This job description may be subject to review to reflect future office requirements.

Section B – Person Specification

Post: Administrative Officer Corporate Services

Responsible to: Finance and Corporate Services Manager

Grade: Administrative Officer

Salary: £23,071 - £24,507 p.a.

Location: Belfast

Method of Selection: Application form (AF); Interview (I).

Essential Criteria – Qualifications, experience, knowledge and job related attributes

- A minimum of 5 GCSEs (Grades A-C) or equivalent including English Language and Mathematics (AF);

And

- Two years' experience of providing administrative support within a finance environment; (AF)
- Experience in the use of Sage Accounts or similar accounting software primarily for the processing of payments and posting of transactions. (AF, I)

Job related skills and attributes

- Attention to detail and a commitment to timeliness, quality and accuracy in information processing; (I);
- Organisational and planning skills and the ability to work under pressure to tight timescales and manage competing work priorities; (AF, I);
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, including the ability to communicate effectively with individuals at all levels; (I);
- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office products, particularly MS Word and Excel, to extract information and produce reports; (AF).
- Ability to work as part of a team and contribute to continuous improvement; (I)
- Experience in the production of bank reconciliations; (AF)

Desirable Criteria

- A qualification in business, finance, accounting or related discipline; (AF)

- Experience of working in a public sector administration or finance role; (AF)

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Given the breadth of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction (namely her roles in investigating complaints about all public service providers in Northern Ireland and in investigating and adjudicating on alleged breaches of the NI Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors), it is important that any actual or perceived conflicts of interest are declared by you.¹

You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have an actual or perceived conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute an actual or perceived conflict, you should still complete this section in order to give the Selection Panel as much information as possible. For further assistance you may wish to consult the Northern Ireland Audit Office good practice guide on conflicts of interest.

Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest detailed in the application form will not prevent you going forward to interview if you are shortlisted but will be explored further to establish how you would address the issue(s) should you be appointed.

¹ See Schedule 3 of Public Services Ombudsman Act (NI) 2016 for the Schedule of Listed Authorities.

Section D – The Application and Selection Process

MAKING AN APPLICATION

Application forms can be obtained by emailing monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk or from the website www.nipso.org.uk.

Completed application and monitoring forms must be returned by email to monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk **no later than 12 noon on Friday 9th June 2023.**

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION FORM

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

NIPSO is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all job applicants. The information you supply on this application form will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used solely for assessing your suitability for the post.

A candidate found to have knowingly given false information, or to have wilfully suppressed any material fact will be liable to disqualification from the process, or if appointed, to dismissal. All appointments are made on merit and in accordance with our Recruitment and Selection Policy. Any canvassing of officers directly or indirectly in connection with an appointment will automatically disqualify the candidate.

Application Forms

Applications will only be accepted on the specific NIPSO application form. Incomplete application forms will not be considered. CVs, letters or any other supplementary material will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms and will not be made available to the shortlisting or interview panel.

As part of the shortlisting process, the panel will consider the standard of written information provided on the application form.

Please also note:

- Applications which are received after the closing date or time will not be accepted.
- Please use black ink/type when completing your application form.
- Please keep responses limited to the space provided and where applications are being typed ensure a minimum font size of 12.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the completed form, together with the completed Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, is returned by the closing date for applications.

Qualifications

Please provide the following information for any qualifications required in the person specification:-

- Year:** the year you were awarded the qualification(s)
- Level:** e.g. GCSE, RSA/OCR Stage 2 and Parts if applicable i.e. Parts 1 and 2, CIPD, RQF/PTLLS, Degree, BTEC National Diploma, BTEC Higher National Certificate etc.
- Subject:** title of subject studied e.g. English, Mathematics
- Mark/Grade:** e.g. A, B, C, Pass, Merit, Distinction, 2:1 etc.

You will be asked to provide original qualification certificates (or, where you have mislaid your original certificates, a certified statement of results from the relevant awarding body) and proof of memberships etc. that are relevant to the post applied for before any offer of employment can be made.

If you believe that your qualification is equivalent to the one required, you must provide specific evidence to demonstrate its equivalency in comparison to the qualification that was specifically detailed in the person specification.

If you possess any professional qualifications, please include the full details and include the date of the award.

If you have membership of a professional body, please include the name of the body or organisation, the type of membership you hold (e.g. student, associate, fellow etc.), the date when this grade of membership was obtained and the expiry date (if any). If the membership has lapsed, please state this.

Experience

It is necessary to state your exact dates and periods of employment as at the application closing date (month/year) because this is calculated to the nearest month for shortlisting purposes. The shortlisting panel will only consider the information asked for in each separate box on the application.

You will be required to clearly demonstrate, by giving personal and specific details on your application form, how you meet the experience detailed in the person specification in the relevant box. If you do not supply sufficient information on your application form to clearly demonstrate that you meet the criteria, you will not be shortlisted.

THE APPOINTMENT

Selection Process

Candidates who demonstrate that they meet the essential criteria and if required, the desirable criteria will be invited to attend interview. **It is anticipated that in person interviews will be held during week commencing 19th June 2023.**

Principles of the Appointment

NIPSO is committed to providing and promoting equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified candidates regardless of their gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, having or not having dependants, pregnancy and maternity, religious beliefs, political opinion, race², ethnic origin, colour or nationality, sexual orientation, disability, age, Trade Union membership or non- membership or criminal records³.

All NIPSO offers of employment are conditional and subject to successful pre-employment checks and the successful applicant will be required to:

- provide documentation to confirm their identity and their right to work in the United Kingdom;
- provide documentation to verify information already provided on the application form, e.g. qualifications, professional registration, driving licence, etc;
- provide a basic AccessNI Check, which the successful candidate must obtain and the cost of which will be reimbursed upon appointment;
- provide satisfactory references, one of which should be your current or most recent employer.

Further Information

If you have any further queries regarding the recruitment and selection process, then please email NIPSO's HR department via (monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk).

² Throughout this document the word 'race' is to be understood, in accordance with the Race Relations (NI) Order, to include colour, race, nationality or ethnic origins. Irish Travellers are recognised under the Order as being members of a racial group.

³ A person's criminal record will be viewed in the context of his/her overall job application, ability to do the job and the responsibility of employers for the care of other employees and children and young people. Only offences relevant to the post in question will be considered.

Section G – NIPSO Strategic Plan

The NIPSO Strategic Plan 2022-25 may be accessed [here](#).

Section E – Terms & Conditions of Employment

- The salary for this post is currently equivalent to Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) AO Grade.
- The post is based at NIPSO, Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN. This is a designated office-based role.
- The successful candidate will be eligible to join the NICS Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme.
- 25 days annual leave plus 12 days public holidays on joining with an additional 5 days after 5 years' service.
- The post is full-time (37 hours per week), subject to a probationary period of 9 months.

Section F – Other Benefits of Working for NIPSO

- Generous occupational sick pay and maternity leave/pay arrangements.
- Flexitime scheme.
- Work-life balance policies.
- Access to Employee Assistance Programme/Occupational Health Consultant.
- Support for ongoing training and development opportunities.