



Northern Ireland  
**Public Services**  
Ombudsman

An abstract graphic consisting of several overlapping, thick arrows pointing upwards and to the right. The arrows are in various shades of blue, red, and orange, creating a sense of movement and progress.

# Finance & Corporate Services Manager

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman**

**Candidate Information Booklet** (NIPSO/FCSM/01-25)

**2024**

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## 1. MESSAGE FROM MARGARET KELLY, NI PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

Thank you for your interest in the position of Finance & Corporate Services Manager at the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

This is an exciting time to join us to help us deliver our vision of making a positive difference to people and public services in Northern Ireland through impartially and independently investigating complaints of maladministration. We view complaints as an ‘early warning’ system to improve public services and our opportunity to inform public policy. We launched our new Strategic Plan in 2022-23 following consultation both internally and externally with the aim to make sure we have a relevant, modern and inclusive Ombudsman’s Office for the people of Northern Ireland.

We have a unique governance structure which reflects my position as the statutory holder of three offices – Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Ombudsman and Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards. This requires a balance between appropriate controls and oversight, while preserving the independence of my role. I am accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly Audit Committee, and we have an independent Audit and Risk Committee who monitor our corporate governance, risk management and control systems.

As Finance & Corporate Services Manager you will play a key role in supporting the development and delivery of our strategic and business plans, as well as ensuring that in delivering on our accountability and value for money obligations, my operational independence is maintained. This is an excellent opportunity if you wish to gain broader experience in a finance and corporate services role and exposure to the unique governance arrangements of NIPSO.

This is a challenging but interesting role. If you are excited about the work that we undertake and believe you have the skills and experience to make a difference, I very much look forward to receiving your application.

**Margaret Kelly**

Northern Ireland Public  
Services Ombudsman



## 2. WHO WE ARE

The Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) was established in April 2016 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. Since 2016, NIPSO’s workload has doubled and the organisation continues to grow.

We are publicly funded but operate independently from all other public bodies in Northern Ireland. We currently employ approximately 60 staff and we are based in Progressive House in central Belfast.

The Ombudsman’s main role is to investigate complaints of maladministration made about public services, including complaints about Government Departments and their agencies, local Councils, health and social care, education bodies, public housing providers and a range of other public service providers. We also play a key role in contributing to broader improvement in public services by sharing the learning from both individual complaints and systemic reports (work that we call ‘Own Initiative’).

The Ombudsman is also the Local Government Commissioner for Standards, and the office investigates and where appropriate adjudicates on complaints where a Councillor is alleged to have breached the Code of Conduct for Councillors. The Ombudsman is also the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Ombudsman.



### 3. WHAT WE DO

The Ombudsman’s role is to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland are served by a fair and efficient public administration that is committed to accountability, openness, and the provision of high quality public services.

Assessing and investigating complaints of maladministration, including professional judgment in health and social care is the largest single area of our work. During 2023-24 we received 1,173 complaints, an increase of 118% over the period since NIPSO was established in 2016 (when 539 complaints were received). The table below illustrates the trend in new maladministration complaints received since over the past five years:

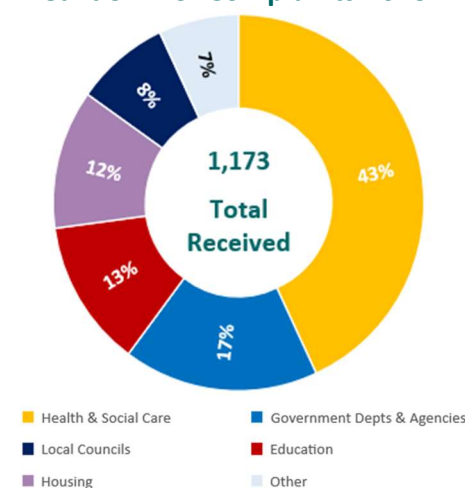
Year	Total	Year on Year % Change	Cumulative change since 2016-17
2019-20	1043	37%	94%
2020-21	927	22%	72%
2021-22	1211	59%	125%
2022-23	1046	37%	94%
2023-24	1173	54%	118%

During 2023-24, 43% of the complaints we received related to Health & Social Care Services in Northern Ireland.

The other 57% of complaints related to Government Departments (17%), Education (13%), Housing (12%) and Councils (8%).

The remaining 7% were categorised as ‘other’ complaints.

**Breakdown of Complaints 2023-24<sup>1</sup>**



In relation to our Local Government Ethical Standards role, during 2023-24 we received 31 allegations that Councillors may have breached the Local Government Code of Conduct. These related to social media posts, disclosure of confidential information and the registration / declaration of interests.

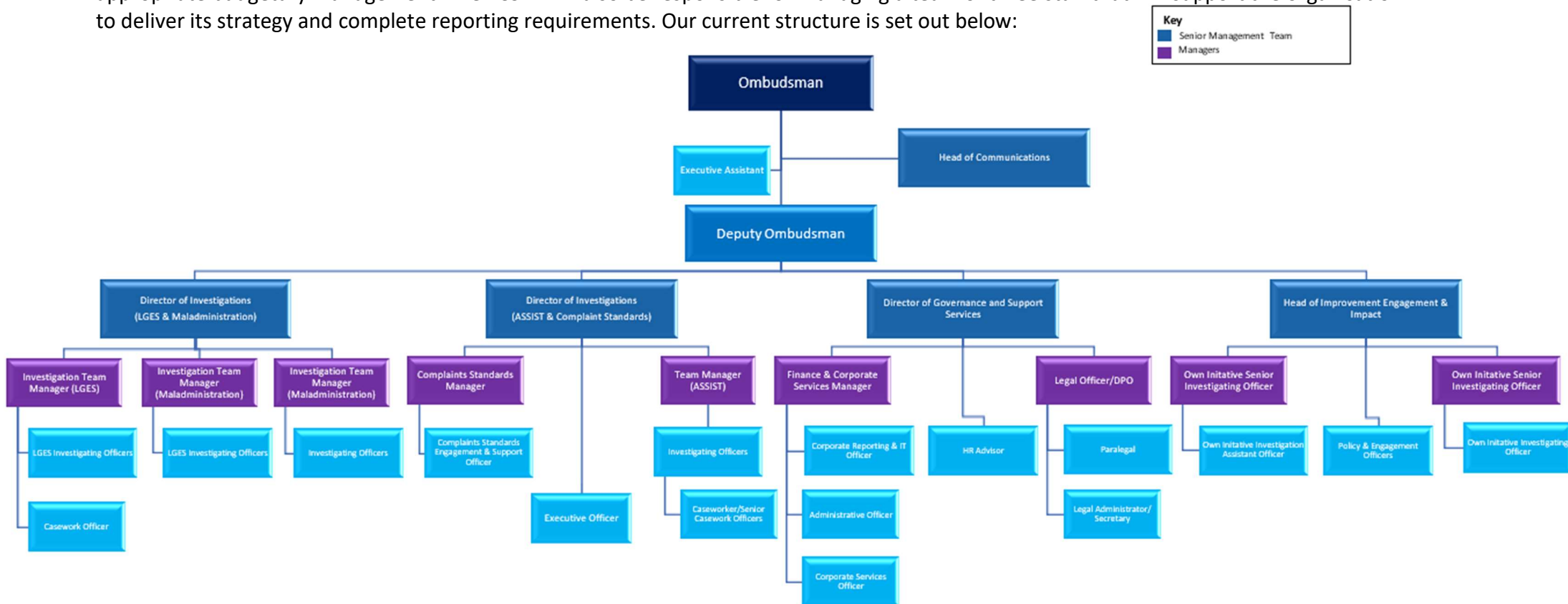
Interested candidates can read more about our future plans in our [Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025](#) and our annual performance in our latest [Annual Report & Accounts 2022-2023](#).

<sup>1</sup> 2023-24 provisional figures

## 4. OUR STRUCTURE

NIPSO has grown considerably since it was established in 2016 both in terms of functions, budget and staff numbers. As a result, NIPSO has embarked on a programme of improvement of its internal systems including the establishment of a new case handling system, a new finance system, establishment of a new records management system and we are embarking on updating the office human resource management system. The senior management team are focused on ensuring that we have effective systems to support the front-line staff of NIPSO, ensuring that we meet our statutory obligations and bring about improvements in public services through our work.

The Finance and Corporate Services Manager (FCSM) will be key in ensuring that NIPSO achieves its strategic objectives, while maintaining appropriate budgetary management. The FCSM will also be responsible for managing a team of three staff that will support the organisation to deliver its strategy and complete reporting requirements. Our current structure is set out below:



## 5. OUR VISION AND VALUES

Our vision and values are very important to us and underpin everything we do as an organisation.

### OUR VISION STATEMENT

Make a positive difference to people and public services in Northern Ireland by providing individual resolution and improved services through learning from complaints.

### OUR PURPOSE

Investigate unresolved complaints about public bodies, uphold standards and ensure accountability for both public bodies and for local Councillors. Contribute to broader improvement by sharing the learning from both individual complaints and systemic reports.

### OUR VALUES

Our **values** underpin and drive all our decisions, actions, policies, processes and systems and how we engage internally and externally.

#### Independence

We are open, non-partisan, unbiased, and we act with integrity.

#### Fairness

We are honest and impartial, ensure all views are listened to and use an evidence-based approach to our decision making.

#### People Focused

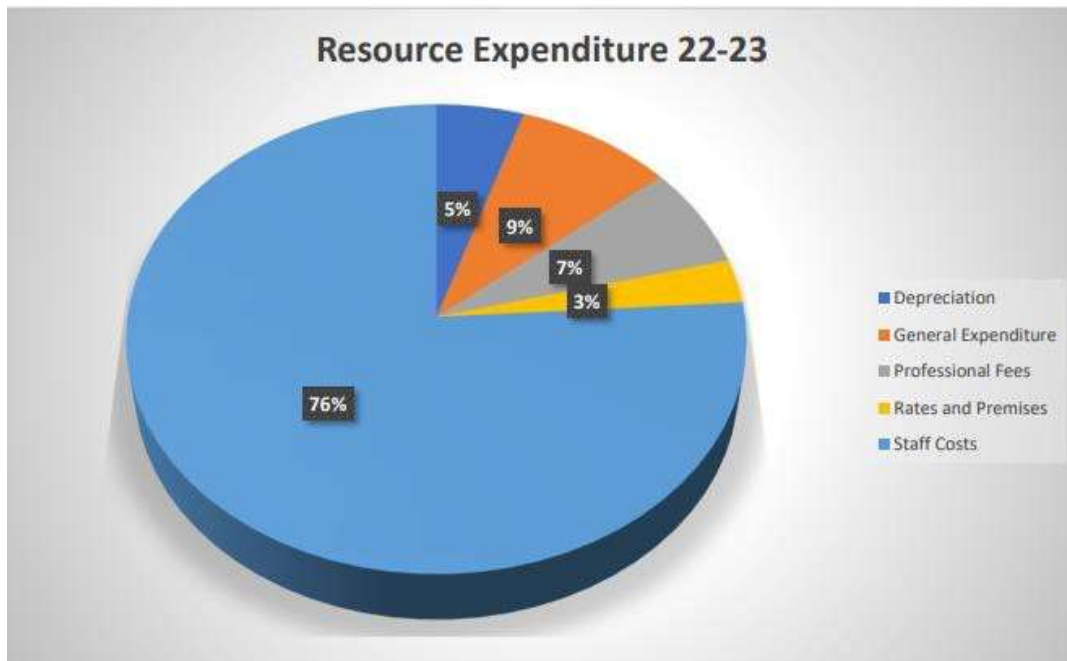
We treat people with respect and empathy and recognise and value individual experience. We are accessible and engage and explain our decision making.

#### Excellence

We deliver an excellent service, meeting our service standards with high levels of governance and accountability. We have a focus on continuous learning and improvement.

## 6. OUR FINANCIALS

We have a total annual operating expenditure of approx. £4m, the vast majority of which relates to our staff costs. The breakdown of our resource expenditure for 2022-23 is summarised below:



You can access our latest accounts in our [Annual Report and Accounts 2022-2023](#)



## 7. JOB DESCRIPTION

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**Job Title:** Finance & Corporate Services Manager

**Reporting to:** Director of Governance and Support Services

**Responsible for:** Corporate Reporting and IT Officer, Corporate Services Executive Officer II & Administrative Officer Finance & Corporate Services and any other posts allocated to the team

**Grade:** Deputy Principal

**Salary:** £40,300 to £43,191 p.a. under review

**Location:** Belfast

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### Main purpose of job

To support the Director of Governance and Support Services in the delivery of NIPSO's corporate services functions in particular Finance, Accommodation and Facilities Management, IT and Information Governance.

The post-holder will develop, manage and oversee the operation of NIPSO accounting and finance systems including the monitoring of NIPSO's finances. The role will include leading on procurement issues, including liaison with CPD and working with managers to conduct procurement.

The post-holder will prepare reports and supporting information to support senior manager's attendance at the Northern Ireland Assembly Audit Committee, the NIPSO Audit and Risk Committee and NIPSO Advisory Panel (when established).

### Summary of principal duties and responsibilities

#### 1. Finance and Governance

- Lead on preparing NIPSO's Annual Accounts in accordance with the relevant legislation and standards including liaison with Department of Finance (DoF);
- Be responsible for the day to day operation of NIPSO financial systems including the preparation of regular timely financial reports to NIPSO SMT to support budget management and financial information for NIPSO Audit & Risk Committee, NIPSO Advisory Panel and the NI Assembly Audit Committee as appropriate;
- Review and update where necessary NIPSO's financial policies, procedures and controls including NIPSOs Standing Financial Rules;
- Manage and oversee the Office asset register;
- Act as SMT's key contact to ensure that NIPSO's Corporate Reporting needs, including operational performance reports, and IT system requirements are met;

- Engage with and maintain close and effective working relationships with a range of external stakeholders for example, DoF, auditors, other agencies and departments;
- Where appropriate act as the point of contact for internal and external audit, maintaining a progress register of audit actions.
- Manage NIPSO records management in line with NIPSO's retention and disposal policies and procedures

## **2. Management Responsibilities**

- Provide leadership to, and support the development of staff reporting to the post (currently: Corporate Reporting and IT Officer, Corporate Services Executive Officer II & Administrative Officer Finance & Corporate Services).

## **3. Procurement and Contract Management**

- Develop, implement and maintain NIPSO's procurement policy and strategy including liaison with managers to undertake procurement within agreed thresholds;
- Oversee tendering for and act as the contract manager in relation to Independent Professional Advice, and other contractual requirements as arising from time to time;
- Support the development of innovation and modernisation of NIPSO systems and processes including IT projects;
- Ensure a register of contracts and contract management documentation is maintained to ensure adherence to best practice.

## **4. Accommodation and Facilities Management**

- Ensure appropriate Facilities Management and Health and Safety arrangements are in place;
- Contribute to the development and maintenance of the NIPSO Business Continuity Plan and put in place the necessary operational arrangements to give effect to the plan.

## **5. General Responsibilities and 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;
- Have due regard for your own safety and that of others, behaving appropriately at all times and reporting all accidents no matter how minor;

- Take personal responsibility for the development of own skills and knowledge through proactive engagement in the internal performance review processes;
- Undertake ad-hoc, cross-functional project work supporting the development of the Office and service provision as reasonably requested by line management.

This job description is subject to review and amendment as the demands of the role and the organisation evolve. Therefore, the postholder will be required to be flexible and adaptable and aware that they may be asked to perform tasks, duties and responsibilities which are not specifically detailed in the job description but which are commensurate with the role.

## 8. PERSON SPECIFICATION

### ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

#### Qualifications

- (i) Applicants must, as at the closing date for receipt of applications, have successfully completed the professional examinations and be a full, current member of at least one of the following bodies:
- Chartered Accountants Ireland
  - The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland
  - The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
  - The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
  - The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
  - The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy
  - The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland

and

- (ii) have at least one year's experience in all aspects of the preparation of public sector annual resource accounts in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001, the annual HM Treasury Financial Reporting Manual (FRM), and the annual Accounts Direction from the Department of Finance

#### Experience

Applicants must, as at the closing date for receipt of applications, be able to demonstrate by providing personal and specific examples on their application form that they have:

- (i) A minimum of 1 years' demonstrable experience in at least 2 of the following:
- a. providing information and supporting analysis to assist senior management attendance at NI Assembly Committees, Boards, Audit and Risk Committees or similar fora; (AF & I)
  - b. budgetary management including supporting the development of bids for resources including in-year Monitoring Rounds process; (AF & I)
  - c. undertaking public sector procurement; (AF & I)
  - d. involvement in the preparation of accounts to public sector standards; (AF & I)
  - e. leading a team delivering a diverse range of functions to successfully deliver organisational objectives; (AF & I)
- (ii) Experience in the use of financial IT systems to include Sage, Coda, Open Accounts or similar business accounting packages, and detailed operational knowledge of the Microsoft Office product suite; (AF & I)
- (iii) Demonstrable ability to communicate orally and in writing. (I)

### **DESIRABLE CRITERIA**

In addition to the above essential criteria, NIPSO reserves the right to only shortlist those candidates who can also demonstrate, by providing personal and specific examples on the application form that they have:

- (i) Experience of corporate governance including risk management; (AF & I)
- (ii) Experience in facilities management; (AF & I)

### **SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES**

Applicants must be able to demonstrate evidence of the following skills, competencies and attributes

- Leading a team
- Oral and Written Communication
- Collaborative Working
- Influencing
- Analytical and Problem Solving
- Risk Management
- Continuous Improvement

## 9. WORKING FOR US

### Remuneration

The salary for this post is currently equivalent to Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Deputy Principal which is £40,300 – 43,191 p.a. (pay award pending).

### Location

The role will be based at NIPSO, Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN.

### Working Arrangements

We operate hybrid working arrangements i.e. a mix of working from home and from the office which offers employees additional workstyle choices.

Candidates should note that whilst we do have a flexible approach, the operational requirements are likely to require office based working a minimum of 3 days per week.

### Working Hours

The post is permanent, full-time (37 hours per week), subject to a probationary period of 9 months.

### Pension

The successful candidate will be eligible to join the NICS Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme.

### Annual Leave

Annual leave entitlement is 25 days annual leave, rising to 30 days after 5 years' service, plus 12 days public holidays.

### Other benefits

We have a generous occupational sick pay and maternity, paternity and adoption leave/pay arrangements, as well as a suite of work-life balance policies. Employees also have access to an Employee Assistance Programme.

We provide support for ongoing training and provide development opportunities for all staff. In 2022 we implemented a coaching framework to ensure all employees of NIPSO receive regular support and guidance from their line manager.

## 10. SELECTION PROCESS

Application forms are available on our [website](#) or obtained by emailing [monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk](mailto:monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk)

Completed application and monitoring forms must be returned by email to [monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk](mailto:monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk) no later than **12 noon on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023**.

Applicants who meet the shortlisting criteria will be invited to participate in a selection and assessment process.

In the event of a high volume of applications NIPSO reserves the right to apply additional criteria in order to achieve a manageable shortlist of applicants.

### **Guidance notes for completing your application form**

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.

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.

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***

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.

### ***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.

You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form 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.

### **Selection and Assessment Process**

Shortlisting will take place during **week commencing 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024**. Candidates who demonstrate that they meet the essential criteria and if required, the desirable criteria, will be invited to attend a competency-based interview.

Interviews are envisaged to take place during **week commencing 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024**. Further details of the process will be provided to candidates invited to participate in this process.

A reserve list of candidates may be held for a period of twelve months and may be activated on a merit basis if a vacancy arises within that period.

### **Principles of the Appointment**

NIPSO is committed to providing and promoting equality of opportunity and to the principle of recruiting on the basis of merit only. We welcome 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, race, ethnic origin, colour or nationality, sexual orientation, disability, age, Trade Union membership or non- membership or criminal records.

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 UK;
- 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 must be from the candidate's current or most recent employer.

### ***Further Information***

If you have any further queries regarding the recruitment and selection process, then please contact Hannah McGuffie, HR Advisor ([monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk](mailto:monitoringofficer@nipso.org.uk))