



Northern Ireland  
**Public Services**  
Ombudsman



# Director of Governance and Support Services

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Candidate Information Booklet

2023

## CONTENTS

	<b>Pages</b>
1. Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman’s Message	3
2. Who We Are	4
3. What We Do	5
4. Our Structure	7
5. Our Vision and Values	8
6. Our Financials	9
7. Job Description	10
8. Person Specification	13
9. Working for Us	15
10. Selection Process	16

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

Thank you for your interest in the position of Director of Governance and Support Services 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 2022-2023 following extensive 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 Director of Governance and Support Services you will play a key strategic role as part of the Senior Management Team 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 senior level experience in a high-profile corporate governance role, including working with the NI Assembly Audit Committee.

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.

We are publicly funded but operate independently from all other public bodies in Northern Ireland. We currently employ approximately 60 staff although we are growing rapidly, 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 and 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 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 quality service.

Assessing and investigating complaints of maladministration, including professional judgment in health and social care is the largest single area of our work. During 2022-2023 we received 1,046 complaints, an increase of 94% 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 2016:

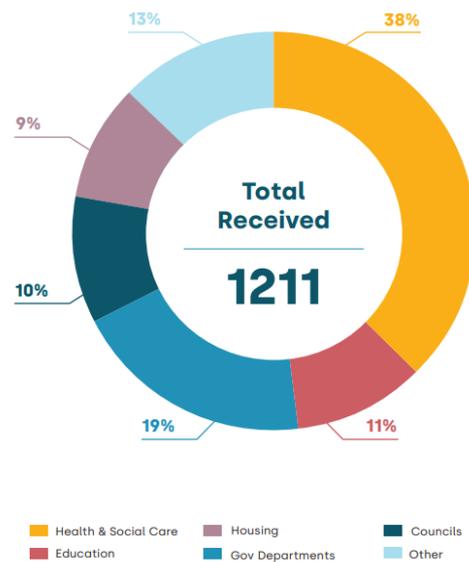
Year	New complaints about public services	Year-on-year % change	Cumulative % increase 2016-17 to 2022-23
2016-17	539		
2017-18	665	23%	23%
2018-19	762	15%	41%
2019-20	1,043	37%	94%
2020-21	932	-11%	73%
2021-22	1,211	30%	125%
2022-23	1,046	-14%	94%

During 2021-22, 38% of the complaints we received related to Health & Social Care Services in Northern Ireland.

The other 62% of complaints related to Government Departments (19%), Education (11%), Councils (10%) and Housing (8%).

The remaining 13% were categorised as ‘other’ complaints.

#### Breakdown of Complaints 2021-2022

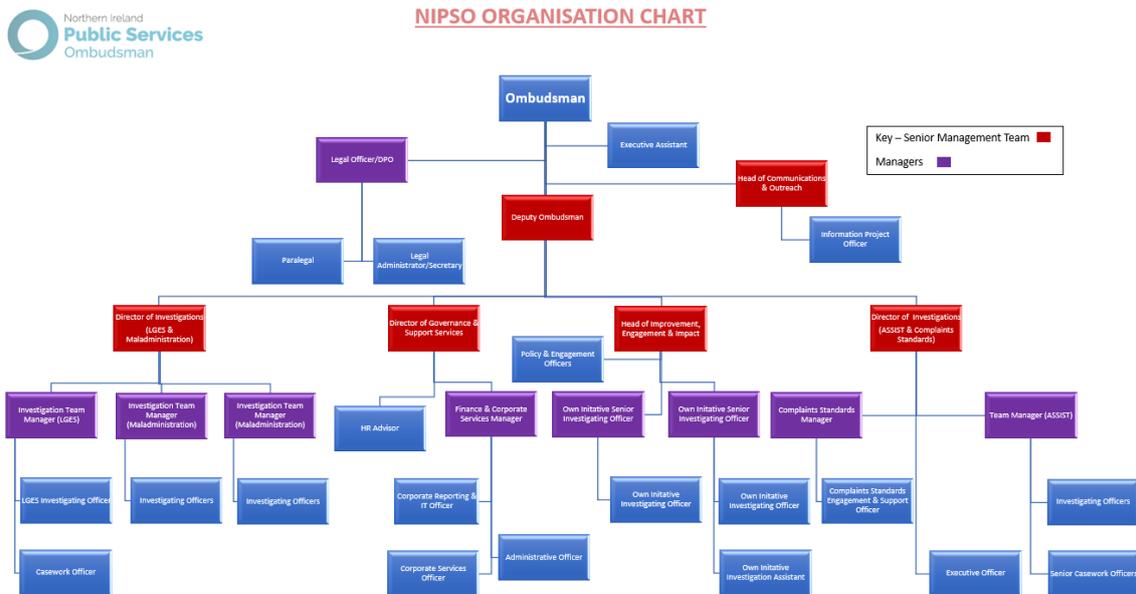


In relation to Local Government, during 2022-2023 we received 45 complaints alleging that Councillors had breached the Local Government Code of Conduct, which was a 7.1% increase from the previous year. These were complaints related to social media posts, disclosure of confidential information and the 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](#)

## 4. OUR STRUCTURE

We carried out a review of our organisational structure during 2022. Our current structure is set out below:



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 Director of Governance and Support Services will continue this work to ensure that we have effective systems to support the front-line staff of NIPSO while ensuring that we meet our statutory obligations and bring about improvements in public services through our work.

The Director of Governance will be a key member of the Senior Management Team helping to develop NIPSO's future strategy as we continue to make a difference for people in Northern Ireland. This role will be key in managing NIPSO's relationship with the Northern Ireland Assembly Audit Committee, NIPSO's contracted internal audit function, the NIPSO Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, the Department of Finance and the Northern Ireland Audit Office. This presents the right candidate with the opportunity to gain experience in this unique governance environment.

## 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

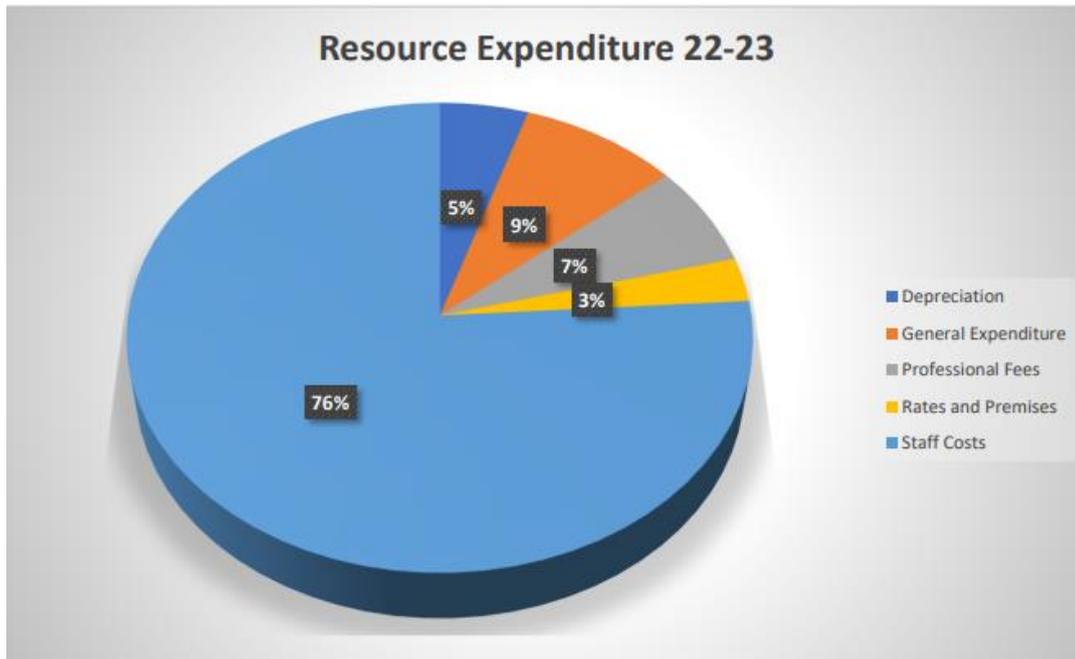
We treat people with respect and empathy and recognise and value individual experience. We are accessible and engage and explain our decision making.

#### 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 2022-2023 is summarised below:



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

## 7. JOB DESCRIPTION

---

**Job Title:** Director of Governance and Support Services

**Reporting to:** Deputy Ombudsman

**Responsible for:** HR Advisor and Finance & Corporate Services Manager

**Grade NICS Grade 7**

**Salary:** £52,578 - £56,237 (pay award pending)

**Location:** Belfast

---

### **Main purpose of job**

The post holder is responsible for supporting the Ombudsman in the management of the unique accountability arrangements which underpin the office. The post holder will ensure that in delivering on NIPSO's accountability and value for money obligations this does not interfere with the Ombudsman's operational independence.

The post holder will oversee the development and delivery of NIPSO's key support services including IT, HR, Facilities Management, Finance, Management Reporting and Information Governance in line with the NIPSO Strategic Plan and Values. As a member of the Senior Management Team, they will contribute to corporate leadership and embedding the values of NIPSO in all internal and external interactions.

The post holder will ensure appropriate systems including reporting capability are in place for the management of finance, performance, risk, human resources and organisational development. They will support the Ombudsman to ensure the effective functioning of both the NIPSO Audit and Risk Committee and Advisory Panel.

### **Summary of principal duties and responsibilities**

#### 1. Senior Management Team (SMT)

- Play a key role in contributing to the strategic and collective leadership of NIPSO as a member of the Senior Management Team.
- Contribute to the development, monitoring and review of NIPSO Strategic and Business Plans.
- Build and maintain effective, constructive strategic relationships internally and externally.

- Have overall responsibility for the budget and sound financial management and reporting for NIPSO.

## 2. Accountability and Governance

- Be responsible for the effective functioning of the NIPSO Audit and Risk Committee and the NIPSO Advisory Panel (once established) ensuring that they provide effective support to the Ombudsman in her role as Accounting Officer.
- Provide information, relevant analysis, papers and reports to the NI Assembly Audit Committee and advise as appropriate on corporate governance issues.
- Attend NI Assembly Audit Committee, as appropriate with the Ombudsman.
- Ensure NIPSO meets its statutory reporting obligations through the timely preparation and laying of the Annual Report and Accounts,
- Act as the key contact for NIPSO with the appointed Internal Auditor ensuring the effective operation of the internal audit function in providing assurance to the Ombudsman.
- Support the Ombudsman in her capacity as Accounting Officer and ensure that the Corporate Assurance Framework is fit for purpose.
- Ensure sound and appropriate risk management and financial governance in accordance with Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.
- Maintain effective relationships with colleagues and those working in Departments particularly DOF and other public bodies.

## 3. Support Services (Finance, HR, Information Governance, IT, Facilities Management and Management Reporting)

- Develop comprehensive and cohesive strategies relating to Support Services and lead on their implementation to support the delivery of the NIPSO strategic objectives.
- Ensure the development of effective policies and procedures for all support functions including HR, IT, Information Governance, Finance and Procurement, including the development and management of an office policy.
- Ensure the operation of procurement in line with best practice to support the delivery of NIPSO's key functions
- Co-ordinate the development of and reporting against NIPSO Strategic and Business Plans.
- Lead on the development and preparation of a range of management reports to support the operation of NIPSO SMT including monthly financial reports, weekly performance reports, staff performance reports and management information as required
- Ensure the preparation and testing of NIPSO business continuity arrangements

- Act as the key point of contact for NIPSO service providers including shared services, contracted legal services, case handling system provider and any other provider of key services ensuring that appropriate contract management arrangements are in place.
- Ensure effective facilities management and Health and Safety arrangements are in place.
- Provide leadership and support the development of the HR Advisor and Finance and Corporate Services Manager.

#### 4. 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

#### 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:

(ii) Relevant experience of leading on the creation and monitoring of organisational budgets as part of a robust framework of financial management.

(iii) Relevant experience in analysing and providing information to Board / Committee meetings and advising, as appropriate on corporate governance issues.

(iv) Relevant experience of engaging with senior external stakeholders to build effective and constructive working relationships.

v) Relevant experience of contributing to both the development and delivery of organisational strategies and business plans.

### 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:

(vi) At least three years' experience in 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.

(vii) At least three years' experience in a management role in an organisation with responsibility for a range of corporate functions, for example finance, procurement, HR, IT, governance and risk.

## **SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES**

Applicants must be able to demonstrate evidence of the following skills, competencies and attributes which will be tested as assessment centre and/or final interview:

- Strategic Leadership
- Oral and Written Communication
- Collaborative Working
- Influencing
- Analytical and Problem Solving
- Decision making and accountability
- Continuous Improvement

## 9. WORKING FOR US

### Remuneration

The salary for this post is currently equivalent to Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Grade 7 which is £52,578 - £56,237 (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, working exclusively from home is not an option.

### 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 30 days annual leave 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 [recruit@headstogether.com](mailto:recruit@headstogether.com).

Completed application and monitoring forms must be returned by email to [recruit@headstogether.com](mailto:recruit@headstogether.com) no later than **12 noon on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 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**

Candidates who demonstrate that they meet the essential criteria and if required, the desirable criteria will be invited to attend an assessment centre

There will be a two-stage process for the selection and assessment of the Director of Governance and Support Services. This will include:

#### **Stage 1: Assessment Centre**

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an assessment centre. Only those candidates who achieve the required pass mark at assessment centre will be invited to Stage 2.

#### **Stage 2: Competency Based Interview**

Candidates who are successful at the assessment centre will be invited to attend a second stage of the selection process with the recruitment panel. This will include a presentation and interview. Candidates will be provided with the presentation topic in advance of the interview.

### **Important Dates**

The assessment centre is envisaged to take place on **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November and Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**. Further details of the process will be provided to candidates invited to participate in this process. Unfortunately, these dates cannot be changed.

Stage 2 of the selection process is envisaged to take place during **week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023** at a specific date and time to be confirmed. Further details of the process will be provided to candidates invited to participate in this process.

### **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 email Angela Barratt at Headstogether Consulting Ltd ([angela@headstogether.com](mailto:angela@headstogether.com)) who are managing the recruitment and selection process on behalf of NIPSO.