



NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

## **Candidate Information Pack**

### **Policy and Research Officer(s)**

**1 permanent post and;  
1 temporary 2-year Fixed Term post (until 31 December  
2026) with possible extension**

**October 2024**

## Foreword from the Chief Executive

Thank you for showing an interest in joining our team as a Policy and Research Officer.

The Commission is focused on protecting and promoting the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland, by providing high quality independent advice to government, the use of investigatory powers and supporting legal challenges. Our education work helps increase levels of compliance and improves service provision across the public and private sectors. At the same time, we engage with communities to empower individuals to understand and be able to fully exercise their human rights.

By joining our highly motivated, professional and successful multi-disciplinary team, you will have the opportunity to use your skills in an organisation that is an internationally recognised centre of excellence.

We want to add a talented individual to the Commission's staff who is equally effective working alone or as a good team player, committed to quality and continuous improvement for yourself and others. The Commission can provide you with excellent personal and professional development opportunities. We are seeking someone who is flexible and can utilise their talents to support the work taking place across a range of our organisation's functions.

If you are interested in working in an organisation with a broad mandate, working in an often challenging environment, and playing an important part in delivering a better Northern Ireland for all, then I look forward to hearing from you.



**Dr David Russell**  
**Chief Executive**

## **1. Role and Functions of the NI Human Rights Commission**

The Commission was established as a result of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. Our governing legislation is the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as amended by the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 and the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. It is a National Human Rights Institution with A status accreditation from the United Nations. This recognition means that the organisation operates independently in full accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 48/134 (the Paris Principles).

The Commission is also a non-departmental public body, and receives grant-in-aid from the United Kingdom government through the Northern Ireland Office. We report to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Our primary role is to make sure government and public authorities protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. We also help people understand what their human rights are and what they can do if their rights are violated or abused. To pursue this objective we consider the full range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Our work is based on the international human rights treaties ratified by the United Kingdom government, domestic legislation and relevant soft law standards.

The statutory functions of the Commission in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are:

1. keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness in Northern Ireland of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights.
2. advising the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Executive of legislative and other measures which ought to be taken to protect human rights—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for advice; and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.
3. advising the Northern Ireland Assembly whether legislative Bills are compatible with human rights
4. providing advice to the UK government and Westminster Parliament on matters affecting human rights in NI.
5. conducting investigations on systemic human rights issues. To do so, we may enter places of detention, and can compel individuals and agencies to give oral testimony or to produce documents.

6. promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland. To do so, we may undertake or support research and educational activities.
7. providing legal assistance to individuals and initiating strategic cases, including own motion legal challenges.
8. monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties and reporting to the United Nations and Council of Europe.
9. working in partnership with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission as mandated through the joint committee created in accordance with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The Commission is mandated in accordance with Article 2(1) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland of the European Union Withdrawal Agreement to ensure there is no diminution of rights protected in the 'Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity' chapter of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement as a result of United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

The Commission's statutory functions for this purpose in accordance with the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 are:

1. monitoring the implementation of Article 2(1) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the EU withdrawal agreement (rights of individuals).
2. reporting to the Secretary of State and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland on the implementation of Article 2(1)—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for such a report, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks.
3. advising the Secretary of State and the Executive Committee of the Assembly of legislative and other measures which ought to be taken to implement Article 2(1)—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for advice, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.
4. advising the Assembly (or a committee of the Assembly) whether a Bill is compatible with Article 2(1)—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a request for advice, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.

5. promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of Article 2(1); and for this purpose we may undertake, commission or provide financial or other assistance for—research, and educational activities.
6. bring any appropriate matters of relevance to Article 2(1) to the attention of the Specialised Committee on issues related to the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland established by Article 165 of the Withdrawal Agreement.
7. bring judicial review proceedings in respect of an alleged breach (or potential future breach) of Article 2(1) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the EU withdrawal agreement; or intervene in legal proceedings, whether for judicial review or otherwise, in so far as they relate to an alleged breach (or potential future breach) of Article 2(1).

The Commission is also designated, with the Equality Commission, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons as the independent mechanism tasked with promoting, protecting and monitoring implementation of Convention in Northern Ireland.

We also engage with other National Human Rights Institutions in the United Kingdom on issues of common interest.

Our Annual Statement, published in December each year, records how much progress has been made towards meeting human rights obligations in Northern Ireland. This strongly informs our future work priorities.

## **2. Current Organisational Structure and Future Plans**

There are seven Commissioners (a full time Chief Commissioner and six part-time Commissioners) appointed by the Secretary of State. As far as practicable, the Commissioners, as a group, is representative of the community in Northern Ireland.

The Commissioners are supported by a small staff team. The senior management team consist of the Chief Executive and five Directors working across five teams:

- legal;
- research and investigations, and advice to government;
- human rights after EU withdrawal;
- communications, information and education, public and political affairs;
- finance, personnel and corporate affairs.

### **3. Our Values and What It's Like to Work for Us**

A human rights-based approach underpins the Commission's work. This is predicated on the conviction that human rights compliant outcomes require processes that adhere to both the values, which underpin human rights laws as well as their substantive content. On this basis our core principles are:

#### **Participation**

People should be involved in decisions affecting their human rights.

#### **Accountability**

There should be effective monitoring of how human rights are implemented and meaningful remedies available when things go wrong.

#### **Non-discrimination and equality**

All forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. People facing the biggest barriers to realising their rights should be prioritised.

#### **Empowerment**

Everyone should understand and be able to fully exercise their human rights.

#### **Legality**

Policies and services should be grounded in enforceable domestic and international human rights laws.

#### **Partnership**

In developing a culture of human rights, the Commission will work with other organisations across a wide spectrum of society.

## 4. Overall Purpose of the Role

The post-holder will contribute to the Commission's work in reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights in Northern Ireland. There are two posts available, one permanent and another to be appointed initially on a two-year, fixed-term basis, subject to possible extension. The permanent post is within the 'core' policy team. The fixed-term post will be within the team overseeing the UK Government's commitment not to diminish certain rights as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This team works closely with 'core' policy colleagues, and it is expected that team members will work across that boundary as required and may rotate between teams over time.

The roles will support the Senior Policy and Research Officer and Director of each team in providing advice on human rights compliance in Northern Ireland to a variety of stakeholders, including Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Westminster Parliament, public authorities, Council of Europe monitoring bodies, United Nations treaty bodies and civil society.

The post-holder will also support the Senior Policy and Research Officer and Director in other areas, including delivering human rights training and conducting statutory investigations.

## 5. Duties and Responsibilities

- a) Reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of law or practice relating to the protection of human rights in Northern Ireland.
- b) Preparing policy advice for submission to the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly regarding human rights compliance, and representing the Commission before legislative scrutiny or other committees.
- c) Preparing policy advice for submission to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on legislative and other measures, which ought to be taken to protect human rights.
- d) Preparing policy advice for submissions to the Westminster Parliament on matters affecting Northern Ireland, regarding human rights compliance, and representing the Commission before legislative scrutiny committees.
- e) Preparing policy advice for submission to public authorities in Northern Ireland regarding human rights compliance, and representing the Commission on advisory groups and in meetings.

- f) Monitoring and promoting the United Kingdom Government's compliance, in Northern Ireland, with international human rights standards, including representing the Commission before United Nations and Council of Europe treaty bodies.
- g) Preparing submissions to inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations.
- h) Conducting policy research as required by the Commission including in the exercise of investigatory powers.
- i) Preparing papers for and attending Commission meetings.
- j) Assisting in the provision of secretarial support to the Joint Committee of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.
- k) Assisting in the provision and delivery of a programme of work on human rights issues in the island of Ireland on behalf of the Joint Committee of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.
- l) Assisting other members of staff on policy issues arising from their own areas of work, and possible ways in which to proceed.
- m) Undertaking training and personal development activity as agreed with the Senior Policy and Research Officer and Director.
- n) Displaying a commitment to the protection of human rights and to the promotion of equality and showing sensitivity to the diversity of views on human rights issues in Northern Ireland.
- o) Undertaking any other duties whenever reasonably required by the Senior Policy and Research Officer, Director or the Chief Executive.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list and the duties associated with the post may be subject to reasonable change from time to time according to the needs of the organisation.



## 6. Employee Specification

### Essential Shortlisting Criteria

Applicants **must** demonstrate at the closing date for receipt of applications that they possess:

- a) University level degree or equivalent

And *either*:

- b) (i) A postgraduate degree, or equivalent, in a legal, policy or research role with exposure to the field of human rights; plus  
At least two years' practical experience gained within the last 10 years working in a legal, policy or research role with significant exposure to the field of human rights

*or*:

- b) (ii) At least four years' practical experience gained within the last 10 years working in a legal, policy or research role with significant exposure to the field of human rights

In addition, the following essential criteria will be tested at interview:

- c) Translating policy and research documents into comprehensible public / stakeholder information.
- d) Ability to demonstrate knowledge of human rights law, and general human rights issues.

### Desirable Shortlisting Criteria

Candidates may be shortlisted for interview on the basis of meeting the essential criteria outlined above. However, in the event of a large volume of applications, NIHRC reserves the right to apply any or all of the following desirable criteria:

- Knowledge of the domestic, regional and international human rights system
- Knowledge of the Northern Ireland constitutional framework and political institutions
- Knowledge and understanding of the legislative processes in the Westminster Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly
- Knowledge of EU law\*

\*Please note that the desirable criterion in relation to knowledge of EU law may be applied to applicants for the role in the human rights after Brexit team but will not be applied in respect of applications to the core team only.

## 7. Application Process

To apply, candidates are required to submit an up-to-date and relevant Curriculum Vitae (CV) detailing career history, and relevant qualifications. Candidates are also required to submit the completed covering letter template to clearly detail how they meet the criteria outlined in the candidate specification. Candidates are also asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Applicants are required to return the following items to [recruit@headstogether.com](mailto:recruit@headstogether.com) by no later than 4pm on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Applicants should ensure they have returned:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Cover letter setting out how the candidate meets the essential and desirable criteria
- Completed Equal Opportunities Statement
- Signed Privacy Notice

If you have any questions about the role, please direct these via email to our HR providers HeadsTogether Consulting Ltd using the email address [recruit@headstogether.com](mailto:recruit@headstogether.com) or alternatively telephone 02890 424030.

**Please note it is up to the candidate to demonstrate clearly how they meet each of the criteria. The shortlisting panel cannot make presumptions about information that is not listed directly or that is ambiguous.**

Applications received after the deadline unfortunately cannot be considered. It is the candidate's sole responsibility to ensure that applications are received by the closing date and time provided.

## 8. Recruitment Process

The recruitment process will include a competency-based interview and an unseen test or presentation. Candidates who wish to apply for both the core team and the human rights after Brexit team will only be required to participate in one interview process. Further details will be provided to shortlisted candidates.

The initial assessment for those who are shortlisted is envisaged to take place during week commencing 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

In addition to the criteria indicated above, the selection process is designed to test the following skills and attributes:

- Seeing the Big Picture
- Changing and Improving
- Effective Decision Making
- Leading and Communicating
- Collaborating and Partnering
- Building Capability for All
- Delivering Value for Money
- Making a Quality Service
- Delivering at Pace
- Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners

### Seeing the Big Picture

- Alert to emerging issues, legislation and trends which might impact or benefit own and team's work.
- Understands own business area strategy and how this contributes to Commission policies and priorities.
- Contributes to the development of policies, plans and service provision to meet citizens' diverse needs based on an up-to-date knowledge of needs, issues and relevant good practice.
- Ensures own business area/team activities are aligned to Commission activity, policy and priorities.
- Actively seeks out and shares experience to develop understanding and knowledge of own work and of team's business area.
- Seeks to understand how the services, activities and strategies work together in the business area to create value for stakeholder/service users.

### Changing and Improving

- Finds ways to improve systems, policy development and structures to deliver with more streamlined resources.
- Regularly review procedures or systems with teams to identify improvements and simplify processes and decision making.
- Prepared to take managed risks, ensuring these are planned and their impact assessed.
- Actively encourages ideas from a wide range of sources and stakeholders and use these to inform own thinking.
- Willing to meet the challenges of difficult or complex changes, encouraging and supporting others to do the same.

- Prepared for and responds appropriately to the range of possible effects that change may have on role/team.

### Effective Decision Making

- Makes decisions when they are needed, even if they prove difficult or unpopular.
- Identifies a range of relevant and credible information sources and recognise the need to collect new data when necessary from internal and external sources.
- Recognises patterns and trends in a wide range of evidence/data that may affect policy and draw key conclusions.
- Explores different options outlining costs, benefits, risks and potential responses to each.
- Recognises scope of own authority for decision making and empowers team members to make decisions.
- Invites challenge and, where appropriate, involve others in decision making to help build engagement and present robust recommendations.

### Leading and Communicating

- Takes opportunities to regularly communicate and interact with staff, helping to clarify goals and activities and the links between these and Commission policy and strategy.
- Recognises, respects and rewards the contribution and achievements of others.
- Communicates effectively orally and in writing in a succinct, engaging manner; knows when to stand ground when needed.
- Communicates using appropriate styles, methods and timing, including digital channels, to maximise understanding and impact.
- Promotes the work of the Commission and plays an active part in supporting the Commission values and culture.
- Conveys enthusiasm and energy about their work and encourages others to do the same.

### Collaborating and Partnering

- Establishes relationships with a range of stakeholders to support delivery of policy and business outcomes.
- Invests time to generate a common focus and genuine team spirit.
- Actively seeks input from a diverse range of people.
- Readily share resources to support higher priority work, showing pragmatism and support for the shared goals of the organisation.
- Deals with conflict in a prompt, calm and constructive manner.
- Encourages collaborative team working within own team and across the Commission.

### Building Capability for All

- Identifies and addresses team or individual capability requirements and gaps to deliver current and future work.
- Develops team members, devoting time to coach, mentor and develop others.
- Values and responds to different personal needs in the team using these to develop others and promote inclusiveness.
- Proactively manages own career and identifies own learning needs with line manager, plan and carry out workplace learning opportunities.
- Continually seeks and acts on feedback to evaluate and improve their own and team's performance.

### Delivering Value for Money

- Recommends actions to achieve value for money and efficiency and reduce fraud and error.
- Cultivates and encourages an awareness of cost, using clear simple examples of benefits and how to measure outcomes.
- Works confidently with performance management and financial data to prepare forecasts and manage and monitor budget against agreed plans.
- Follows appropriate financial procedures to monitor contracts to ensure deliverables are achieved.
- Monitors the use of resources in line with organisational procedures and plans and hold team to account.

### Managing a Quality Service

- Makes effective use of project management skills and techniques to deliver outcomes, including identifying risks and mitigating actions.
- Develops, implements, maintains and reviews systems and service standards to provide quality, efficiency and value for money.
- Work with team to set priorities, goals, objectives and timescales.
- Establishes mechanisms to seek out and respond to feedback from stakeholders and service user about policy and service provided.
- Promotes a culture that tackles fraud and error, keeping others informed of outcomes.
- Develop proposals to improve the quality of service with involvement from a diverse range of staff, stakeholders or delivery partners.

### Delivering at Pace

- Successfully manages, supports and stretches self and team to deliver agreed goals and objectives.

- Shows a positive approach in keeping their own and the team's efforts focused on the goals that really matter.
- Takes responsibility for delivering expected outcomes on time and to standard, giving credit to teams and individuals as appropriate.
- Plans ahead but reassess workloads and priorities if situations change or people are facing conflicting demands.
- Regularly monitors own and team's work against policy, milestones or targets and acts promptly to keep work on track and maintain performance.
- Coaches and supports others to set and achieve challenging goals for themselves

### Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners

- Considers, in consultation with experts, alternative ways of working with partners and contractors to identify more efficient outcomes, balancing cost, quality and turnaround times.
- Works with experts in engaging effectively and intelligently with delivery partners in order to define and/or improve policy and service delivery.
- Gathers and uses evidence to assess the costs, benefits and risks of a wide range of delivery options when making decisions.
- Identifies and understands relevant legal and commercial terms, concepts, policies and processes (including project approvals and assurance procedures) to deliver agreed outcomes.

### **Adjustment Requirements**

If you have any adjustment requirements to enable you to participate in the selection process, please make this known on the application form provided.

### **Transgender Requirements**

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact Joanne Kane of HeadsTogether Consulting Ltd on 02890 424030. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

## **9. Terms and Conditions of Employment**

### **Duration of Contract**

Successful candidates may be offered either a permanent or a temporary (fixed-term) full-time post until 31 December 2026 dependant on which roles they have applied for.

## **Start Date**

The person appointed will be expected to take up duty as soon as is practicable.

## **Working Hours**

The normal office hours are from 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, however there may be the requirement to work outside of these normal hours. The job requires a considerable degree of commitment, flexibility and adaptability on the part of the post-holder to meet quality standards and working deadlines. He/she will maintain at all times such availability, flexibility and mobility as is necessary to the pursuance of the job.

The Commission operates a hybrid working model and flexible working hours arrangements. A period of remote working may be negotiable to facilitate re-location. This post is suitable for job share.

## **Probation**

Satisfactory completion of a twelve-month probation period is a condition of continued employment in the position.

## **Salary**

The grade of the post is currently equivalent to Northern Ireland Civil Service Grade Staff Officer, with a current pay band of £ 34,524-£35,712 per year (under review).

Salary will be within the above range within which pay progression will be as per NICS pay policy. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the starting salary will be at the pay band minimum (ie £34,524 per year).

## **Allowances**

Travelling and subsistence expenses will be paid at approved NICS rates to the holder of this post when s/he is absent from the Commission's premises on Commission business.

## **Notice**

The appointment may be terminated by either party with at least one months' notice in writing.

## Holidays

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, currently 12 per annum, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days (April to March) rising to 30 days on five years' continuous service.

## Location

We are located at:

Fourth Floor  
Alfred House  
19 – 21 Alfred Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8ED

## Pensions

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission operates the Civil Services Pension Scheme. Further details of the pension can be found on the Civil Services Pension website at <http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/>

## Policies

The Commission recognises the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) for the purposes of collective bargaining. It is intended that so far as is reasonably practicable the Commission will seek to mirror the policies and procedures adopted and amended from time to time by the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

Employees should refer to the NICS policies and procedures at <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-civil-service-handbook>