

PERMANENT SECRETARIES' STOCKTAKE (PSS)
Friday 5 December 2025, 09:00am
Executive room, Stormont Castle

In attendance:

Katrina Godfrey (Chair)	Louise Crilly	Hugh Widdis
Ian Snowden	Neil Gibson	Alex Gordon
Ronnie Armour	David Malcolm	Judith Andrews
Peter Toogood	John Smith	

John McKendry (Secretariat)
Jayne Byrne (Secretariat)

Lindsay Irwin (LI) – item 3 only
Catherine Shannon (CS) – item 3 & 4 only
Paul Duffy – item 4 only

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies received from HoCS, Colum Boyle, Mike Farrar and Denis McMahon. John Smith, Peter Toogood and Judith Andrews deputised respectively.

2. Minutes 21 November 2025

The minutes of the meeting of 21 November 2025 were agreed.

3. Discussion on future SCS reporting

LI & CS joined the meeting at 9.05

NG provided background and advised of his intention to bring live SCS recruitment data to PSS on a quarterly basis to enable strategic insight of resource at a more corporate level. He advised this session was to demonstrate the draft versions and invite feedback on the design and relevance of the data presented.

LI presented two draft dashboards, SCS Quarterly Update (NICSHR) and SCS Workforce Size and Shape (P&OD) and demonstrated the range of data that would be available to PS colleagues and how that would be displayed.

The group discussed the presentation including timescales, the need to make distinction between general service and professional and technical grades when it comes to time in post, the benefit of counting posts as opposed to people (which would take in to account secondees). Issues were raised around

security of the data and the need for information on the number of G5's in post for more than 4 years. LI agreed to provide that although highlighted this data is not available through HRConnect so will require a manual exercise.

LI left the meeting at 9.35

3.1 **Pilot AO recruitment exercise in the North-West**

CS updated on the success of the recent pilot AO recruitment exercise and advised that offer letters are due to issue today to successful candidates with a merit list also produced. The exercise was completed in seven weeks in comparison to eighteen months for the last AO recruitment exercise. Feedback from candidates and staff involved has been very positive. Some negative feedback was received and has been considered and addressed PSS commended and supported the work on this pilot exercise.

PD joined the meeting at 9.40

Action: LI to speak with the P&OD Workforce Data Team to provide PS with list of G5s in post over four years

4. **Integr8 Update**

NG introduced the item and advised PD will be providing a further update to NICS Board in January.

PD outlined the key strategic benefits of Integr8 including:

- Improved Efficiency & Effectiveness
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Customer-Centric Service Delivery
- Integrated Target Operating Model (TOM)

The opportunity to standardise and streamline Finance and HR policies, processes and have a single source of HR and Finance data will deliver a range of benefits, including the potential for financial savings and is a key enabler for the delivery of the NICS People Strategy.

The status of the programme is 'amber' and resourcing remains a major challenge, options are being considered to retain staff in vital roles at critical points of delivery. PD emphasised the significant level of change that will need to be delivered, which require active support by departments, and the likely impact this will have on business-as-usual activities and departmental teams.

Some mitigations are being considered, and additional funding has been made available this year to release staff to contribute to the co-design process. The level of commitment will increase as we move into detailed design, testing and implementation.

PSS provided feedback and suggested some background and context be included in the update coming to the January NICS Board.

NG suggested that Departments include a standing item for Integr8 progress on their Departmental Board agendas and advised he will meet the NICS Board NEMs with PD ahead of the NICS Board meeting. PD offered further briefings to Departmental senior teams.

Action: NG and PD to meet NICS Board NEMs ahead of January NICS Board.

PD and CS left the meeting at 10.15

5. Departmental Audit and Risk Committees

KG provided background and PSS discussed the paper circulated in advance from Dfl. The important role of ARAC members was highlighted as was the development opportunity the role offered. The corporate responsibility that SCS members carried was also highlighted. It was agreed that more needed to be done to encourage senior colleagues to consider being part of ARACs, including to simplify the application process for interested staff, including those below SCS. On the approach being proposed by NISRA, NG advised that he would review the note that was previously issued to Departments and KG agreed to draft a memo to senior staff for consideration by permanent secretaries.

Action: KG to circulate draft for consideration.

6. Tour de Table

6.1 DfC

JS updated on a current court case and the launch of the UKG Child Poverty strategy.

6.2 DoH

PT updated on GP contract discussions, Health Trust planning guidance currently under development and the current Flu outbreak. He emphasised the importance of flu vaccinations.

6.3 DfI

JA advised on the appointment of Declan McGeown as interim Permanent Secretary and subsequent G3 appointments, attendance at upcoming PAC on road openings by utilities and current consideration of shared environmental services which will be discussed with DAERA and DfE.

6.4 DoF

NG updated on Integr8 resourcing, commended Julie Nelson DfC for support on an area of work, updated on the budget and accompanying HoCS to an upcoming meeting on workforce planning and recruitment, and attendance at an upcoming Finance Committee.

6.5 DE

RA updated on a school closure in the North-West.

6.6 DfE

IS updated on an INI matter and reflection on the use of AI to produce a consultation report.

6.7 TEO

DM updated on the recruitment competition for the Police Ombudsman NI.

6.8 DAERA

KG provided an update on Bluetongue virus and a recent visit to the Brussels office.

7. AOB

- 7.1** IS raised a request for a Finance Director secondment to fill a vacancy at the Northern Regional College (NRC). PSS content to approve. IS to write to NICS HR to advise on the position.

Action: IS to confirm agreement of PSS to NICS HR re secondment

8. Date of next PSS Meeting

- 8.1** The next meeting of PSS will take place on Friday 12 December 2025 at 9.30am in the Executive Room, Stormont Castle.

8.2 The NI Honours panel meeting will take place from 8.30am – 9.30am.

8.3 There will be no formal meeting of PSS on Friday 19 December. PS agreed to meet at 9.30am in Parliament Buildings.