

NICS SENIOR LEADERSHIP GROUP (SLG)
Friday 12 June 2026, 09:00am
Executive Room, Stormont Castle

In attendance:

Jayne Brady/HOCS (Chair)	Louise Crilly
Moirá Doherty	Mike Farrar
Neil Gibson	Katrina Godfrey
Grainia Long	Joanne McBurney
Emer Morelli	Sharon Smyth (<i>up to 9.25am only</i>)
Ian Snowden	Hugh Widdis

Catherine Shannon and Claire Walsh, NICS HR (*item 2 only*)
Jayne Byrne (Secretariat)

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies received from Mike Farrar, Alex Gordon, David Malcolm and Prof Helen McCarthy. Joanne McBurney attended on behalf of Mike Farrar and Sharon Smyth attended briefly on behalf of David Malcolm.

2. NICS HR Operational Delivery Update

Catherine Shannon provided an update on NICS HR Delivery for 2025-26 and outlined key areas of focus for 2026-27. CS reflected on the progress made since the initial ambition was set out almost four years ago for NICS HR to Stabilise – Develop – Grow and highlighted the continued development of HR delivery across people services, resourcing, and the focus on continuous improvement. The presentation emphasised the importance of using stronger management information to support decision-making and to help departments address workforce challenges in a more consistent and strategic way.

On people services, CS highlighted the restructuring of employee relations, the supportive management of absence and the significant increase in referrals to Occupational Health Services. She noted the emphasis being placed on robust case management and on developing clearer KPIs to support oversight of employee relations caseloads across departments. In relation to sickness absence, the presentation drew management information developed by NICS HR and pointed to a marginal year on year improvement overall, while underlining that mental health remains the principal driver of absence. Work has commenced with NISRA as part of a deep dive into absence, highlighting the need for more proactive absence management and deeper exploration of trends in particular departments, for example DfC and DAERA, was also noted.

The update also covered resourcing and business improvement activity, including the KPIs and performance for the new model for recruitment, the development of further KPIs and evolving dashboards to provide visibility of recruitment activity, the affordability GRIP departmental review, ongoing work on Grade 6 supply and temporary promotions, and the planned exit from HRConnect meaning the insourcing of HR services including ER and Resourcing.

Claire Walsh outlined developments in data reporting including a new directory of available dashboards, including the monthly workforce dashboard, the competition dashboard and a workforce trends data reporting tool due to launch to nominated departmental leads shortly. Members welcomed the progress made, particularly the increased availability of data to target issues and support better-informed workforce planning. The discussion highlighted the value of bringing this information to Permanent Secretaries and departmental boards.

NG commended the work of Claire Walsh and her team in the development of the new directory in particular the workforce trends data reporting tool.

Members were encouraged to use the data available to inform structures and staffing and they were asked to consider issues within their departments which they would like addressed at future quarterly meetings with CS, NICSHR. If these could be provided NG in advance a forward workplan can be developed.

Action:

(1) Members to consider issues for consideration at NICSHR next quarterly update (September 2026)

3. Minutes & Actions arising from SLG 5 June 2026

The minutes of the meeting of 5 June 2026 were agreed and actions noted.

4. Executive business

HoCS provided a high-level update on ongoing Executive business.

4.1 Strategic Policy Group on MEC

HoCS provided an update on the Strategic Policy Group meeting held earlier in the week. Discussion focused on the scenario modelling currently underway.

5. Response to Civil Disturbances

HW provided an update on the current situation and future planning.

MD provided an update on developments over the last week. She agreed to convene a meeting of relevant Permanent Secretaries to discuss lessons learnt and future planning.

If required HoCS will speak with UKG re potential funding.

Action:

- (2) MD to arrange a meeting with relevant Perm Sec colleagues
- (3) HoCS to speak with UKG regarding funding if required

6. AOB

6.1 Future SLG meetings

- Friday 19 June 2026 – NI Honours Panel
- Friday 26 June 2026 – NO SLG due to EU Presidency Briefing
- Friday 3 July 2026 - joint meeting with G3s @ PRONI

6.2 EM provided an update on Fleadh Belfast 2026.

6.3 HW provided an update on litigation.

6.4 JMcB advised of vote for strike action and the publication of the Muckamore Abbey report scheduled for Thursday 18 June 2026.

6.5 GL advised that as part of the cross departmental initiative, Young People Leaving Care, 4 care leavers will today get the keys to their new homes. GL encouraged attendance at the SOLACE engagement meeting scheduled to take place on Monday 15 June 2026.

7. Date of next scheduled SLG meeting:

Friday 3 July 2026 @ PRONI

Meeting closed 10.55am