

# Public Appointments Guide

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An overview of Public Appointments in Northern Ireland and helpful information for those wishing to apply.



The  
**Executive Office**  
[www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

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# Introduction

The purpose of this Guide is to raise awareness of the public appointment opportunities that exist in Northern Ireland.

Public appointments cover many aspects of our daily lives, from the arts to agriculture, from education to the environment, from planning to public safety and from transport to tribunals. If you decide to take up a public appointment you will become involved in making decisions that help develop, shape or deliver government policy and public services.

This Guide has been designed to provide much of the information needed to understand what it means to be a member of the board of a public body. It also seeks to explain the type of bodies currently in existence and how the process of appointing people to these bodies works in practice.

The Executive is committed to increasing diversity within our public appointments, subject to the principle of appointment on merit. Ministers have set challenging timescale targets for achieving gender equality in public appointments as part of a package of measures to broaden involvement of under-represented groups in public life.

The Government believes that it is essential that people from a wide range of backgrounds apply and take up public appointments so that the boards of public bodies reflect the rich diversity of our society and better understand the needs of the communities they serve.

Appointments are made on merit and applications are welcome from all sections of society particularly those sectors which are currently under represented on our public bodies, including women, people with a disability, people from an ethnic minority background and those under the age of 30.

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**It's not who you know, it's what you can do.**

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# Contents

## Public Appointments explained:

What is a Public Body?	04
What is a Public Appointment?	05
The Role of the Board of a Public Body	06
Being a Board Member	06
Being a Board Chairperson	07
Diversity	07
Guaranteed Interview Scheme	08
Time off for Public Duties	08
Remuneration	09
Double Paying	09
Standards of Behaviour	10
Conflicts of Interest	11
Personal Liability	11
Case Studies	12 - 13

## The appointments process:

How Appointments are made	14 - 15
Independent Advice	16
Criteria for Appointment	16
Sift	16
Shortlisting	17
Other Eligibility Factors	17
Completing the Application Form	18 - 20
Monitoring	21
The Interview	22 - 23
Ministerial Choice	24
Feedback	24
The Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland	25
Further information	26
NI Direct	26

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# Section 1

## Public Appointments Explained

### What is a Public Body?

Public bodies in Northern Ireland cover everything from arts to sport and consumer interests to more specialised areas such as historic buildings and monuments.

These bodies are organisations set up to provide advice or carry out functions on behalf of Government.

To preserve their independence public bodies operate separately or what is commonly referred to as 'at arms length' from Central Government.

Ministers are ultimately responsible for the activities of the public bodies sponsored by their Departments.

Public bodies are also sometimes known as QUANGOS - Quasi Autonomous Non Government Organisations.

The most common type of public body are Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) of which there are three main types.

**Executive NDPBs** generally operate under a specific piece of legislation, employ their own staff and manage their own budgets. They carry out a service or function on behalf of Government. Tourism Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are examples of Executive NDPBs.

**Advisory NDPBs** provide independent and expert advice to Ministers and Departments on specific issues or services, sometimes in technical or specialist areas. The Historic Monuments Council and the Charities Advisory Committee are examples of Advisory NDPBs.

**Tribunal NDPBs** have jurisdiction to operate in a specialised field of the law but do so independently of Government. The Fair Employment Tribunal and the Planning and Water Appeals Commissions are examples of Tribunal NDPBs.

The term 'public body' also covers public corporations and health and social care bodies/agencies.

**Public Corporations** are publicly owned and controlled but have substantial freedom to conduct their own affairs e.g. Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

**Health and Social Care Bodies/Agencies** administer and deliver health and personal social services to the public e.g. Patient and Client Council.

### What is a Public Appointment?

A public appointment is generally an appointment, made by a government Minister, to the Board of a public body. Joining as either a member or a chair, is an opportunity for individuals and communities to partner with organisations, enhancing our public services for everyone.

A public appointment allows individuals from different backgrounds to play a part in directing and managing the services that government provides.

Public appointees bring independence, balance and a fresh, external perspective to the work of the Board and, where appropriate, bring specific skills, knowledge or expertise to bear.

As a public appointee you will take part in discussions, review paperwork, work with partner organisations and oversee the preparation, approval and implementation of corporate plans.

Public bodies are, in the main, managed by a Board or Management Committee made up of a number of executive and independent non-executive directors.

The executive directors are drawn from the body itself, for example, the Chief Executive or the Finance Director.

The non-executive directors, including Chairpersons, are drawn from society and are classed as public appointments. Executive and non-executive directors are full and equal members of the Board.

The majority of appointments are filled by members of the general public. However a small number are held by people who have been nominated by organisations such as local councils, trade unions or the main churches.

Most positions are part time and whilst some are paid, many are not, although you may be able to claim travel and other relevant expenses (for example childcare). A public appointment usually lasts between one and five years and may be renewed for a second term (up to a maximum period of 10 years).

Current public appointment opportunities can be found on NI Direct.

## The Role of the Board of a Public Body

The role of the Board of a public body is to provide leadership, vision, continuity of purpose and accountability to the general public. Many public bodies are set up by legislation, which sets out the powers and duties of the body concerned.

### In addition to these responsibilities the main tasks of any Board are:

- to set the organisation's aims and objectives;

- to oversee development of strategies, plans and policies;
- to ensure effective financial control;
- to monitor how the organisation is performing; and
- to promote the organisation's role in the community it serves.

## Being a Board Member

A board member's role will vary depending on the nature of the public body to which he or she has been appointed and the capacity in which they have been appointed.

### As a general rule board members are expected to:

- set the strategic direction of the public body and provide stewardship of all public resources entrusted to it;
- attend board meetings regularly and be well prepared by reading relevant papers in advance;
- attend subcommittee meetings in areas such as audit and finance;
- attend training events and keep up to date with issues relevant to the work of the organisation;

- contribute to board discussions and decision making and share responsibility for those decisions;
- when required, represent the board at events; and
- abide at all times by the Principles of Public Life

The relevant body will provide induction which is appropriate for the particular appointment. Members are further supported with additional development needs or training as necessary.

## Being a Board Chairperson

Being the Chairperson of a Board is a challenging and exciting opportunity. The Chairperson will be expected to provide clear and strategic leadership to the Board, often acting as the Ambassador for the organisation.

A Chairperson would likely be involved in building constructive and effective relationships at a strategic level and liaising with both external and internal stakeholders.

## Diversity

The Executive is committed to a policy of attaining greater diversity in public appointments. Ministers have set challenging timescale targets for achieving gender equality in public appointments as part of a package of measures to broaden involvement of under-represented groups in public life.

Every public appointee brings their own personal qualities, skills and experience to the board. These may have been gained through current or previous employment, involvement in community or voluntary activities, leisure activities, activities undertaken at school or college, in their personal life or simply as a service user or consumer.

A traditional career path is not a prerequisite to taking up a public appointment. With such a wide variety of public appointment opportunities, there is no single type of 'right person' – on the contrary, as diverse a range of individuals as possible are required to provide the full spectrum of views, skills and experience which Boards require. Indeed it is a diverse range of viewpoints and life experiences which help to make Boards operate effectively.

Appointments are made on merit and applications are welcome from all sections of society particularly those sectors which are currently under represented on our public bodies, including women, people with a disability, people from an ethnic minority background and those under the age of 30.

## Guaranteed Interview Scheme

Some departments operate the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability, who demonstrate that they meet the criteria for the post, a guaranteed invitation to interview.

To be eligible for the GIS you must be considered as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which defines a person with a disability as someone who

has, or has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment which has had a substantial adverse long term effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Full details will be provided in application packs.

## Time off for Public Duties

The time commitment required varies from appointment to appointment. Between one and two days a month (including perhaps some evening meetings and public events) would not be unusual although some appointments may require a greater or lesser commitment.

You have the right to time off for certain public duties and services. Your rights vary depending on what you do and what the duty or service is.

**Under the law, you are allowed time off for public duties if you are an 'employee' and one of the following:**

- a justice of the peace
- a member of a local authority, police authority or district policing partnership, local education authority, educational governing body, health authority or primary care trust
- a member of any statutory tribunal or of the boards of prison visitors

If you qualify, you are allowed reasonable time off to go to meetings or to carry out your duties. Your employer doesn't have to pay you while you take time off for public duties, although many do.

More information can be found at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/employment/employment-terms-and-conditions/time-off-and-holidays/time-off-for-public-duties.htm](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/employment/employment-terms-and-conditions/time-off-and-holidays/time-off-for-public-duties.htm) or by contacting:

### The Department for Economy

Employment Relations Policy and Legislation Branch  
Adelaide House  
39-49 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8FD

## Remuneration

Public bodies differ in terms of size, structure, responsibilities and profile. Most public appointments are part time and whilst some are paid, many are not, although you may be able to claim other expenses such as travel.

The three most common forms of remuneration are an annual fee (or honorarium), daily rate and attendance fee/allowance.

## Double Paying

Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that there is a general guiding principle that an individual should not be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. As a result applicants who already work in the

public sector may not be entitled to claim remuneration for a public appointment if the duties are undertaken during a period of time for which they are already paid by the public sector.

## Standards of Behaviour

Ministers expect that the conduct of those they appoint to serve on the boards of public bodies will be above reproach.

Like others who serve the public, public appointees are expected to uphold the seven principles of public life set by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the seven principles are:

### Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest;

### Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships;

### Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias;

### Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this;

### Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing;

### Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful; and

### Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## Conflicts of Interest

Any interests that a potential board member might have which may be relevant to the work of the public body concerned must be declared when applying for a public appointment.

Conflicts of interest are not always a barrier to appointment, however you should expect that any real, perceived or potential conflicts will be explored by the selection panel to ensure that there is full confidence in both your position on the board and the board itself.

### A conflict of interest could arise in a number of ways, including:

- financial or other interests relevant to the work of the public body;
- relationships with other people or organisations that could lead to divided loyalties, real or perceived;

- access to privileged information or trade secrets that could give an unfair personal advantage to people with allied business interests;
- the perception that an appointment is a reward for past contributions or favours; or
- membership of some societies or organisations.

No board member should use, or give the appearance of using, their position on a public body to further their own interests or those of others.

## Personal Liability

Board members have some liability for the decisions taken by the board and for their conduct and actions as board members.

Any board member who acts honestly and in good faith will not have to meet any personal civil liability that may be incurred as a result

of carrying out his or her responsibilities as a board member. However, this indemnity does not protect a board member who acts recklessly or in bad faith.

## Case Studies

There are examples of people from all walks of life already involved in public appointments. Nisha Tandon is a Board Member of the Arts Council and Sharon O'Connor is Chairperson of the Education Authority.

### Nisha Tandon

Board Member of the Arts Council

Nisha Tandon has been a Board Member of the Arts Council since 2012. She is the Executive Director of ArtsEkta - one of the few organisations on the island of Ireland proofing ethnic arts, culture and heritage. She founded the organisation in 2006. She has also been involved with a range of other arts-related groups, for example being a Director of Cahoots Theatre Company and being involved in Belfast City Council's Festival Forum Strategy group and recently selected as a member of a UK/Ireland Advisory Panel for Voluntary Arts Ireland.

She played an important part in the development of the Indian Community Centre. Nisha is a graduate of the National School of Drama in New Delhi and is a trained Indian classical dancer.

Nisha believes strongly in the importance of increasing involvement in the arts by all those in Northern Ireland from ethnic communities, recognising the contribution they can make to the cultural diversity and richness of the entire community.

She sees the Arts Council as having a particular role to play and enjoys the opportunity being on the Board gives her to be part of that work. She sees the engagement with established ethnic communities and with new residents as something for all arts organisations, not just for those with a focus on this area, and sees the Intercultural Arts Strategy as a key part of this engagement. Nisha welcomes the breadth of vision and involvement that being on the Board gives her and her colleagues.

### Sharon O'Connor

Chairperson of the Education Authority

Sharon O'Connor was appointed as Chairperson of the Education Authority in April 2015. Throughout her life Sharon has been involved in voluntary work, motivated by trying to make a positive contribution where she can. She started out as a young mother getting involved in a committee concerned with play and education matters in her local community.

Sharon originally applied for a public appointment as part of her own continuous professional development. Responsible for the cultural economic development of Down District, she was keen to keep abreast of developments in the arts, heritage, cultural and tourism sectors and so applied for and was appointed to the Board of the Arts Council.

Sharon quickly realised that her role as a member of the Arts Council was more about contributing to the strategic development and governance of the organisation rather than the issues she was originally interested in. As a result of this insight Sharon went on to undertake a range of further professional development to enhance her skills as a Non Executive Director and also undertook a Diploma in Director Development provided by the Institute of Directors achieving Chartered Director status.

As Chairperson of the Education Authority, Sharon's job is to provide leadership to the Board ensuring that it manages governance, risk and finance and oversees the work of the Executive team. The Board also set the Strategic direction for the Authority taking direction from the Minister and his officials to progress the education agenda.

Sharon believes her career has been enhanced as a result of taking on public appointments. She encourages those considering applying "If you are interested in making a contribution to civic society I urge you to apply, ask for help from someone who has come through the public appointments process and get involved.

A rich mix of people and talents makes for a good board so if you want to contribute and are open to new experiences why not make an application?".

## Section 2

# The Appointment Process

### How Appointments are made

The aim of the public appointments process is to appoint candidates capable of carrying out the role, selected on merit, using fair, open, transparent and appropriate procedures.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland regulates Ministerial appointments to most public bodies and publishes a Code of Practice (available online at [www.publicappointmentsni.org](http://www.publicappointmentsni.org)), which provides Departments with guidance on the process to be followed when making public appointments.

The Code of Practice is underpinned by seven principles that govern how public appointments should be made. The seven principles are:

#### Merit

All public appointments will be made on the basis of merit. Only those individuals judged to best meet the requirements of the post will be recommended to Ministers for appointment to public bodies.

#### Diversity

The make-up of the Boards of Northern Ireland public bodies do not adequately reflect the make-up of the population.

The opportunity to appoint the best people is greatly increased when every potential applicant is attracted and encouraged to apply and when individual differences are truly valued.

Departments should ensure, as far as possible, that Boards are balanced in terms of skills and experience, and that opportunities to apply for positions on Boards are open to the communities they serve.

#### Equality

Departments must ensure equality of opportunity and equal treatment of all applicants at every stage of the appointment process, including adherence to anti-discrimination law. It is for Ministers and their Departments to ensure that they are fully versed in these matters.

### Openness, Transparency and Independence

The practices employed by Departments at every stage in an appointment round must be open, transparent and consistent with the recognised principles of open government. All public appointment competitions must include a demonstrable element of independent participation in the assessment of applicants.

#### Integrity

Public appointees must be people who understand, apply and are committed to the principle of integrity and will perform their duties with moral rigour and honesty without personal or corporate gain.

#### Proportionality

Whilst the Commissioner's code must be followed for every appointment, the procedures applied at each stage of an appointment should be proportionate to the size and purpose of the public body and to the posts to be filled. The proportionality principle must not be used to circumvent proper procedures or avoid good practice.

#### Respect

Throughout the public appointment process, candidates should be treated with respect; this applies from the first contact with the Department through to completion of the appointment process.



## Independent Advice

The Commissioner's fourth principle includes independence, which in practice means the use of an Independent Assessor on the selection panel.

The role of the Independent Assessor is to assist Ministers and their Departments to make effective public appointments by providing an assurance that appointments have been made on merit.

Independent Assessors are external experts who play a full and active part of the appointments process.

## Criteria for Appointment

When a public appointment competition is being held, an information pack will be available for all those considering applying. The pack will contain details of the appointment including the criteria required to perform the role and details of how to apply.

For those competitions that use an online application form, hard copies and alternative formats are available upon request.

Selection criteria may vary from appointment to appointment depending on the position being filled.

The selection criteria describe the competences required, i.e. what an appointee must be able to do in order to be effective in the role being filled.

The application form is an essential part of the process and is designed to allow applicants to use specific examples of past behaviour to show how they meet the criteria for appointment.

## The Sift

An initial sift of all submitted application forms will be carried out to identify all those applicants who (i) are eligible, i.e. not disqualified because they work for the public body or have already served two terms on the board, and (ii) who have demonstrated that they meet the selection criteria set out in the information pack.

These individuals will be called for interview.

Any applicants who are not eligible or do not demonstrate that they meet the selection criteria will not proceed beyond this stage of the process.

## Shortlisting

If, following the initial sift, the number of candidates eligible to progress to the next stage is considerably greater than the number of vacancies and a Department feels there are too many people to call for interview, a shortlist may be drawn up.

When a shortlist is required, the application forms of the candidates who passed the sift will also be assessed against any short listing criteria set out in the information pack.

Any candidates who do not demonstrate that they meet the short listing criteria will not proceed beyond this stage of the process.

Those candidates who pass both the sift and short listing will be called for interview.

## Other Eligibility Factors

Issues such as immigration control, nationality, a criminal history record check and proof of identity are not mandatory for every public appointment process and will

only be applied where a Department deems them relevant or necessary. Full details will be provided within the particular application pack.

## Completing the Application Form

Application forms are the preferred application method because they offer the best opportunity for ensuring the consistent assessment of candidates.

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) may not always provide evidence of how a candidate meets the specific criteria for appointment. Applicants need to be assessed on a 'like for like' basis and only applications completed in a similar format will make this possible. For this reason CVs are seldom asked for or accepted.

The application form will ask you to provide certain personal information about yourself and to provide evidence showing how you meet the criteria for appointment. You may also be asked to supply the names of at least two individuals who would be willing to provide a reference on your behalf.

It is recommended that you spend time to research and understand the functions of the organisation to which you are applying. Think about how your experience can contribute to the public board's needs.

If you are not from a public sector background take time to understand the governance environment of a public body. It may be useful to look at the Programme for Government ([www.northernireland.gov.uk/topics/work-executive/programme-government](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/topics/work-executive/programme-government)), Managing Public Money ([www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/managing-public-money-ni-mpmni](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/managing-public-money-ni-mpmni)) or the sponsor Department's corporate plan.

Many people are not used to writing about themselves or describing what they have achieved. Remember to follow any instructions carefully and bear in mind the following points when completing the application form:

- review the selection criteria before completing the form;
- provide at least one example for each of the criteria (more if requested);
- the same example (provided it is relevant) can be used to demonstrate how you meet two or more selection criteria;
- never combine any of the selection criteria or address a criterion by referring the reader to other parts of the application form;
- there may be several aspects to a criterion so ensure you provide evidence that shows how you meet all of it;
- use actual examples that show how you meet the criteria, describe what you personally did and the impact it had. Think in terms of outcomes and achievements;
- avoid personal attitudes and opinions or saying how you would do something;

- examples can be drawn from any aspect of your experience be it education, work, leisure, community or voluntary activity etc;
- do not assume that the reader has any prior knowledge of the subject;
- use simple and easy to understand language, avoid jargon; and
- make sure if completing a hard copy form, that your completed application form is legible and that for both electronic and hard copy applications you keep a copy.

The key is to give the reader specific information about how well you meet the criteria for appointment. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience and personal attributes and make sure you take full advantage of the space available to provide practical evidence that best demonstrates how you meet the selection criteria.

The following model may help you to structure your examples and express them in a logical manner:

**Situation:** Briefly outline the situation.

**Task:** What was your objective?  
What were you trying to achieve?

**Action:** What did you actually do?  
What was your unique contribution?

**Result:** What happened?  
What was the outcome?  
What did you learn?

Teamwork is a criterion often found in many public appointments. It may be expressed as 'making an impact with others' or 'working as part of a team'. Many public appointments involve some element of teamwork although the type and size of the team may vary from board to board.

What the criterion is seeking however, is evidence of how you operate in a team environment. This could be based on a team you have previously been in or are currently in, it could be a work team or it could be a team from a community, voluntary or sporting capacity.

You should describe the type of team it is and its purpose [situation], what it does and who else is involved [task], your individual contribution to the team [action] and how your contribution assisted the team to meet its aims [result].

The following examples demonstrate two possible approaches to this criterion. Example A is incomplete and provides little substantive evidence of the applicant's ability to work as part of a team. Example B is a more complete answer and provides direct evidence of how the applicant has made an impact in a team environment.

**Example A**

Making an Impact with Others — describe a team of which you are or have been a member, and the contribution you have made to the success of that team.

“I have been a school Governor for the last two years and I also sit on several subcommittees. On a personal level I am committed to collective decision-making and responsibility.

I believe that effective working relationships with those around you are very important and that it is vital that decisions are made as a group. I have no difficulties in working with others.

I have excellent interpersonal skills and believe I am more than competent in negotiating, influencing and building consensus”.

**Example B**

Making an Impact with Others – describe a team of which you are or have been a member, and the contribution you have made to the success of that team.

“I have been a member of the Board of Governors of my local school for the last two years and as well as being an ordinary Board Member, I also sit on the Finance Subcommittee.

In my role as a school governor I work as part of a team (7 people) during our Board meetings. As a school governor I have been directly involved in negotiating, influencing others and building a consensus during Board meetings and in making decisions collectively as a group. [Situation]  
Recently the Chairperson on the Board rang me before a meeting to say he wouldn't be able to attend and asked if I would stand in for him and chair the meeting. [Task]

As this was my first experience of chairing the meeting, before it began I explained to the rest of the Board of Governors what had happened and checked that they were happy for me to carry on and chair the meeting. I did this because some on the Board had been school governors longer than me and I felt that, in order for the meeting to go smoothly, it was important that everyone present was in agreement with what was being proposed.

I acted as Chair for the duration of the meeting and did my best to encourage everyone present to contribute to the board's discussions.

I worked my way down through the agenda and made sure that each item was discussed in turn. I checked that whenever any decisions were taken that agreement had been reached on the basis of a consensus around the table. I also ensured that any decisions we made were fully recorded in the minutes of the meeting.  
[Action]

At the end of the Board meeting all agenda items had been discussed and a course of action agreed for each of them. A number of issues had been put on the agenda for the meeting because they needed to be decided and these were resolved satisfactorily thus helping the school to run more smoothly  
[Result]”.

The use of the words situation, task, action and result in the example are for illustrative purposes only. Your completed application form must be submitted by the specified closing date and from the forms received the Department will decide who will go forward to the next stage of the process.

**Monitoring**

In the public interest and to ensure that equal opportunity measures are effective, Government Departments in Northern Ireland monitor equality data such as gender, age, ethnic origin, community background, and any disability of all applicants for public appointments.

This information is gathered, maintained and processed for public appointment purposes only and strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Monitoring information is published anonymously each year in the Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report.

The information gathered through the equal opportunities monitoring form is for statistical purposes only and forms no part of the selection process. It does not form part of the sift and is not shared with the interview panel at any point.

Once the successful candidate has been selected, he/she will be asked to complete a political activity form. The political activity relates to information already in the public domain and does not ask for private information such as voting preference. The information provided will be included in the press release regarding the appointment.

## The Interview

As a general rule no one should be appointed to the Board of a public body solely on the basis of the written evidence contained in their application form.

Criteria based interviewing is currently the most common method of conducting appointment interviews. It is a means of identifying candidates who have the ability to perform the role of board member.

Candidates are required to provide evidence in the form of examples of past behaviour that demonstrate their ability. It doesn't simply focus on what you may have done but also how you did it.

Criteria based interviewing tests candidates against the specific selection criteria for a particular appointment. The application form gives you an opportunity to provide examples relevant to the specific selection criteria, these in turn provide the interview panel with information and evidence about you and gives a starting point for questions designed to obtain a deeper understanding of your abilities.

An interview panel should consist of at least three members, at least one of who should be an Independent Assessor.

Don't underestimate the importance of the interview; it is a crucial part of the appointments process and thorough preparation is essential.

### You can prepare for the interview by:

- reading and thoroughly understanding the selection criteria;
- reminding yourself of the examples you used in your application form and being prepared to expand on these at the interview;
- rehearsing how you might relate your experiences to the interview panel emphasising your own role and contribution; and
- not assuming that your qualities and experience will speak for themselves.

### During the interview:

- listen carefully to the questions, if you don't understand a question ask for clarification;
- answer with good clear examples that provide evidence of your ability and which relate to the criteria the panel is looking for; and
- don't sell yourself short, be positive and show enthusiasm.

An interview panel can only speculate about how you would actually perform as a board member. The best way to convince them that you could do well is to offer evidence of past behaviour.

If it appears from information on your application form that there might be a conflict of interest or that one might arise in the future, the interview panel will explore this with you to establish if it would prohibit you from holding the appointment.

Interview panels should also ensure that candidates demonstrate they have an understanding of and are committed to the seven principles of public life.

At the end of the interview you may have an opportunity to add anything you feel may be relevant. If you think you can improve on your previous answers or give additional relevant information do so at this point, but remember the panel will be working to a timetable so keep additional information as concise as possible.

## Ministerial Choice

After the interview process is complete the panel will draw up a list of candidates that they consider have the ability to perform the role effectively. The recommendations the panel makes will inform the Minister's ultimate decision on who should be appointed. The successful candidate or candidates (if there is more than one appointment) will, in due course, receive a letter of appointment.

A Minister may also create a reserve list, operative for one year from the date of the Minister's decision. This can be used to fill any further vacancies in the particular Board that may arise during the lifetime of the competition.

Once an appointee has confirmed acceptance of the appointment the Department is required to publicise it and usually does so by issuing a press release.

In line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice, the press release will include information on the person being appointed, the length of the appointment and whether it is paid or unpaid, details of any other public appointments the person holds and any declared political activity.

## Feedback

Everyone who applies for a public appointment will be kept informed by either the Department or HRConnect (on behalf of the Department) of the progress and ultimate outcome of his or her application in a timely manner.

Unsuccessful candidates may wish to contact the Department or HRConnect and ask for feedback on their performance. Details on this will be found in the Information Pack.

## The Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland

The Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPA NI) regulates, monitors and reports on Ministerial appointments to most public bodies in Northern Ireland.

The Commissioner is required to prescribe and publish a Code of Practice and to audit Departmental appointment processes to establish whether the Code of Practice is being observed.

The Commissioner also investigates complaints about the handling of appointment processes. Complaints should, in the first instance, be referred to the Department making the appointment.

If a complainant is dissatisfied by the Department's response, they may then ask the Commissioner to investigate the matter. However, the Commissioner does not investigate how a body is run or the actions of its members.

One of the requirements of the Commissioner's Code of Practice is that the 'CPA NI Regulated' logo (see below) must appear on all publicity material for competitions to appoint members to the boards of public bodies that fall within the Commissioner's remit.



The Commissioner is required to publish an Annual Report, available online at [www.publicappointmentsni.org](http://www.publicappointmentsni.org) or from the Commissioner's Office:

### The Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland

Dundonald House  
Annexe B  
Stormont Estate  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Belfast  
BT4 3SB

**Telephone:**  
028 9052 4820

**E-mail:**  
[info@publicappointmentsni.org](mailto:info@publicappointmentsni.org)

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## Further Information

A Report on Public Bodies and Public Appointments in Northern Ireland is produced annually. The Annual Report sets out in detail the number of applications received and the number of appointments made by the nine Government Departments. Appointments made by the Northern Ireland Office (a UK Government Department) are not included in the Annual Report.

The Central Appointments Unit (CAU) in the Executive Office has central policy responsibility for public appointments in Northern Ireland.

CAU publishes a six-monthly list of forthcoming public appointment vacancies called 'All Aboard'. This list is compiled using information provided by the sponsoring Departments and includes telephone numbers for departmental contacts who can deal with queries about specific appointments.

CAU maintains a mailing list for those who wish to receive a copy of the biannual All Aboard. If you would like your name to be added to the CAU mailing list please contact:

### **Central Appointments Unit**

Room A5.09  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3SR

### **Telephone:**

028 9052 3495

### **E-mail:**

[admin.cau@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:admin.cau@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

Both the Annual Report on Public Appointments and All Aboard are available at [www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-appointments](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-appointments)

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## nidirect

All public appointment vacancies across government are advertised on the nidirect website at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/public-appointments.htm](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/public-appointments.htm)

