



Northern Ireland Office

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Candidate Information Booklet



FOREWORD FROM SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland. I am looking for an outstanding individual who can make a real contribution to electoral administration in Northern Ireland and bring fresh thinking to some of the challenges that the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland will face in the coming months and years.

The enclosed information seeks to answer many of the questions you may have about the role and work of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland. I want to appoint an individual who will bring vision, influence and innovation to this role; someone who is able to work collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders and successfully deliver free and fair elections.

I welcome applications from all suitably experienced individuals regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, political opinion, sexual orientation, age, disability and gender. I particularly welcome applications from those with a disability, those from a black or ethnic minority background and those who have not previously held public appointments as these groups are currently under-represented in positions in public life.

I want to encourage the widest possible pool of talent for this important appointment. Thank you for your interest.

**RT HON CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

Introduction

You may already have some idea about the important work of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland and the following pages will tell you more about its purpose and the nature of the role of Chief Electoral Officer.

If you believe you have the experience and qualities we are seeking, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

The Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

The arrangements for electoral administration in Northern Ireland are different from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The system in Northern Ireland is administered centrally by the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland ('the CEO') who is a statutory office holder independent of Government. They are assisted by the staff of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland ('EONI'), the administrative structure created to support the CEO in the discharge of their statutory duties.

The CEO is both the electoral registration officer for the whole of Northern Ireland and the returning officer for all elections and referendums in that jurisdiction. They are the Petition Officer for all recall petitions in Northern Ireland. The main duties and responsibilities are set out in the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (as amended by Article 6 of the Electoral Law (Northern Ireland) Order 1972), the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006.

The Principal Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Office is responsible to Parliament for all expenditure incurred by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Structure

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) is the name given to the group of permanent (approximately 36 employees) and casual staff who support the Chief Electoral Officer in the performance of their duties. It has no separate statutory existence or responsibilities. It operates from a headquarters building in Belfast.

The EONI is currently working to deliver a new Electoral Management System and to implement the significant changes that will be introduced as a result of the Elections Act. The Chief Electoral Officer will play a vital role in overseeing these changes and introducing more resilience and efficiency into the delivery of elections in Northern Ireland.

If you would like more information on the EONI you can access their website at www.eoni.org.uk

The Role

The position of Chief Electoral Officer will become vacant with effect from 1 April 2023. The role is a challenging but rewarding opportunity. It calls for someone with excellent judgement who can lead, motivate and achieve results.

Key responsibilities:

The current responsibilities of the post include:

- Leading the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland through a period of significant electoral reform and ensuring that the office remains on a sustainable footing to deliver electoral services over the longer term;
- Corporate accountability for ensuring that appropriate controls are in place and that resources are used efficiently and effectively, giving value for money;
- Maintaining good working relationships with key stakeholders including the UK-wide Electoral Commission, political party representatives and district councils;
- Acting as the Returning Officer for all elections and referendums and as the Petition Officer for recall petitions within Northern Ireland;
- Maintaining the Register of Electors for Northern Ireland, including ensuring that the register is accurate and promoting registration across all sections of society;

- Making recommendations to the Secretary of State in relation to the practical implementation of electoral legislation in Northern Ireland;
- Minimising the scope for electoral fraud and abuse whilst maintaining public confidence in the impartial and independent electoral service;
- Preparing polling station schemes that facilitate access for all electors; and
- Acting as Assessor to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and the District Electoral Area Commissioner.

Person Specification

An outstanding individual is sought to become the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland: someone with good judgement, resilience and sensitivity; someone with a track record of achievement at board or senior executive level in the private or public sector; someone experienced in financial management and meeting challenging performance objectives.

The successful applicant will be someone who can give strategic and operational direction to the work of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, provide strong leadership and build an inclusive organisation. Critically, the successful candidate must be able to command cross-community respect and confidence in Northern Ireland.

Essential Skills

Candidates for this demanding role will need to demonstrate the following core competences:

- Setting direction - an understanding of the political and public sector context in which the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland operates, able to set and prioritise strategic outcomes and deliver operational change, with a focus on improving service delivery and value for money;

- Delivering results - ability to identify economic, market and customer issues, using these to promote innovative business models and commercial agreements that deliver greatest value;
- Making effective decisions - ability to analyse complex strategic issues that cut across all aspects of the business and demonstrate sound judgement to minimise risks and achieve effective outcomes;
- Communicating and collaborating - demonstrate excellent external and internal communication skills, with an ability to develop a strong collaborative culture during a period of organisational change.

The Appointment Panel will assess your suitability for appointment by comparing the information you give in your CV and personal statement against the essential skills. You should therefore review the essential skill requirements before preparing your CV and personal statement.

Terms of appointment

It is expected that the appointment will commence with effect from 1 April 2023 or as close to that date as possible. Candidates may also wish to note that:

- The position is based in Belfast;
- The position is full-time;
- Remuneration on appointment will be within the range £74,912 - £84,122 and will be paid monthly in arrears;
- This position is pensionable. If the successful applicant is not already a member of the Civil Service Pension Scheme then they will be able to join the scheme;

- The term of office will be for a period of five years from the date of appointment; and;
- If you are appointed to the post, you will need to undergo a Security Check (SC) clearance.

Conflicts of interest

In the interests of transparency and openness, applicants are asked to consider whether their appointment may give rise to a conflict of interest and state this clearly on the application form. You should provide information regarding interests that you, or your immediate family, have that might be construed as being in conflict with the role of Chief Electoral Officer.

An appointee to a public position could find that matters or incidents which previously attracted no attention could become matters of legitimate public interest once the person concerned holds a public appointment. Actual or perceived conflicts might include, for example, a situation where a candidate has interests in an organisation that might benefit from a contract with the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland.

There may be issues in your personal or professional history (including any convictions or bankruptcy) that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment to Ministers or the Electoral Office or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised. It is important that you bring them to the attention of the Advisory Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue/s in your application.

In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media and blogs. Due diligence may be carried out on any publicly available information and shared with the Advisory Assessment Panel and Ministers. The panel may explore any issues you declare with you or that have been identified from our due diligence checks before they make a recommendation on the appointment.

A potential conflict will not necessarily preclude an individual from appointment but candidates must be prepared to have this explored during the recruitment process and before an appointment is confirmed.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

It is important that all public appointees uphold the standards of conduct set out in the Committee on Standards on Public Life's Seven Principles of Public Life. A copy of the principles is appended at **Annex A**.

How to apply

The Northern Ireland Office is committed to the principle of public appointments on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process and to providing equal opportunities for all, irrespective of race, age, disability, gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, transgender and working patterns.

All applications received by the closing date will be acknowledged and put before a duly constituted Appointment Panel, which will include an independent member. The Panel will in due course make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who may wish to meet all the appointable candidates.

Applications should be sent by email to: **ceo2023@nio.gov.uk**

The closing date for applications is **12 February 2023**.

Please enclose with your application:

- The completed application summary form, including your personal statement (of no more than two sides of A4) summarising your proven ability related to the person and job specifications. Your personal statement should provide specific and detailed examples to demonstrate how you meet the essential criteria (including what you did to achieve a specific result);
- Completed Equality & Diversity Monitoring Questionnaire; and
- A full CV (including education and professional qualifications, career history, and relevant achievements and responsibilities).

Process

It is expected that candidates selected at the shortlisting stage will be interviewed by the Appointment Panel in early March 2023 but this timescale may change at short notice. Interviews will take place either in Belfast or remotely by video conference. If you require any further information about the application process you should contact the competition coordinator by email: **ceo2023@nio.gov.uk**

This competition is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

DISABILITY CONFIDENT - OFFERING AN INTERVIEW TO PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

As a Whitehall department the Northern Ireland Office has adopted the Department for Work and Pensions sponsored Disability Confident scheme, which has replaced the Guaranteed Interview Scheme or Two Ticks scheme that was widely used in Great Britain. Disability Confident is a voluntary scheme which supports the Government's commitment to halve the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people by encouraging employers to think differently about disability and to take positive action to improve how they attract, recruit and retain disabled workers. We will make reasonable adjustments to help you attend the interview. You may wish to contact the competition coordinator (see contact details above) about your individual requirements should your application proceed to this stage in the process.

We will also offer an interview to a fair and proportionate number of disabled applicants that meet the minimum criteria for the job - you must be able to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate relevant skills and experience for each of the selection criteria set out in the essential skills section. This does not mean that all disabled people are entitled to an interview. The aim of this commitment is to encourage positive action for disabled people, encouraging them to apply for positions in public life by offering them the assurance that, should they meet the minimum criteria as advertised for the position, they will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, talent and abilities at the interview stage. It is important to note that in certain recruitment

situations such as an urgent appointment or if we receive a higher volume of applications that far exceeds the number of those expected then we may need to limit the overall numbers of interviews offered. This will include the number of interviews offered to disabled people that meet the minimum criteria for the job. If you have a disability and require reasonable adjustments then you may wish to contact the competition coordinator about your requirements at the interview stage should you proceed in the process.

Complaints

If you feel that you have any complaint about any aspect of the way your application has been handled, we would like to hear from you. In the first instance please e-mail, the competition co-ordinator at: **ceo2023@nio.gov.uk**

Complaints must be received by the competition coordinator within 1 calendar month from the issue or after the campaign has closed, whichever is the later. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt and answered as quickly and clearly as possible; at the most within 20 working days of receipt. If this deadline cannot be met we will inform you why this is the case and when you can expect a reply.

If, after receiving our response you are still not satisfied, you may contact the Commissioner for Public Appointments:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments

Room G/8, Ground Floor

1 Horse Guards Road

London SW1A 2HQ

Tel: 0207 271 6729 / 0815

Email: publicappointments@csc.gov.uk

The Commissioner for Public Appointments regulates and monitors appointments to public bodies to ensure procedures are fair. Information about the Commissioner's

policy and manner in which complaints are investigated are set out in the Commissioner's leaflet *Your Guide to Making a Complaint about a Public Appointments Process*. More information about the role of the Commissioner and their Code of Practice is available from website address:

<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/>

Use of your personal information

Your personal information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. You will not receive unsolicited paper or electronic mail as a result of sending us any personal information. No personal information will be passed on to third parties for commercial purposes.

When we ask you for personal information, we promise we will:

- only ask for what we need, and not collect too much or irrelevant information
- ensure you know why we need it
- protect it and insofar as is possible, make sure nobody has access to it who shouldn't
- ensure you know what choice you have about giving us information
- make sure we don't keep it longer than necessary
- only use your information for the purposes you have authorised

If you apply for this post we may hold your information for audit purposes as set out below:

- Your initial contact details, including your name and address will be held by the Northern Ireland Office for a period of at least 2 years.
- If you submit an application form, the form and any supporting documentation will be retained for at least 2 years.
- Information held electronically, including your contact details and the monitoring information which you provide will also be held for at least 2 years.

We ask that you:

- give us accurate information
- tell us as soon as possible of any changes
- tell us as soon as possible if you notice mistakes in the information we hold about you

The Commissioner for Public Appointments regulates and monitors appointments to public bodies to ensure procedures are fair. We are required by the Commissioner for Public Appointments to retain information about the people who apply for public appointments within his remit, and make this information available to him for audit purposes, if requested to do so. Information you provide in your application may therefore be made available to the Commissioner for Public Appointments and the Commissioner's auditors on a confidential basis in order to help fulfil the Commissioner's formal complaints investigation role and for audit purposes.

Our data protection policy is in line with the requirements of GDPR and data protection legislation and the requirements of the Governance Code on Public Appointments. The Commissioner's requirements relating to the information we collect about applicants are set out below:

- your initial contact details, including your name and address may be held by the Northern Ireland Office for a period of at least 2 years;
- if you submit an application form, then for audit purposes, the form and any supporting documentation will be retained for at least 2 years;
- monitoring information which you provide will also be held for at least 2 years but may be held for statistical purposes for up to 5 years.

If you would like these details to be removed from our records as soon as this recruitment exercise is complete, please inform the competition coordinator via the email address provided above.

Equal and diversity monitoring information

This information is not used in the selection process. It will be removed on receipt and is not seen by the panel assessing your application. We use this information to monitor the diversity of candidates we attract and those we appoint.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

The principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected for appointment to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, NDPBs and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public services. The principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

Selflessness Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

Integrity Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.