

Requests to NICS HR for use of a Trawl as a Method to Fill

In order to fully consider requests from Business Areas, NICS HR Vacancy Management has advised that it would be helpful if responses to the following questions could be incorporated into the background information to the post and rationale for the Trawl request when being passed to NICSHR.

Questions to be considered and responded on are:

- **What are the proposed eligibility criteria for the trawl?**

Staff would have to meet the SO competencies in addition to demonstrating how they meet the specific criteria below:

1. A minimum of 2 years' experience at 2nd level management level* of effectively leading and managing teams and providing direction to staff in a complex and challenging operational public service pension environment in the last 5 years;

AND

2. A minimum of 2 years' experience at 2nd level management level* of playing a significant role in the successful delivery of a key operational public service pension related objective in the last 3 years;

* 2nd level management – is defined as a manager who manages at least one level of managers and reports directly to a Staff Officer or equivalent grade within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The duties would typically include assisting senior management to deliver strategic directives at operational level and supervising managers and staff to ensure smooth running of the business.

- **Why are these considered essential?**

Pensions is a complex area, with many competing priorities and staff management. In the past CSP have dealt with significant demands concurrently including the implementation of Pension Reform, development and implementation of a new IT systems and a Voluntary Exit Scheme for the NICS and other bodies; in conjunction with the normal Business as Usual. Due to a legal decision called the 'McCloud' judgement the transitional protection element of Pension Reform was deemed to be discriminatory by the Court of Appeal and unlawful. This means that CSP has a statutory requirement to remove the discrimination by ensuring there is no detrimental impact on active members, retirees, deferred and dependant members. The timetable to do this is being driven by HMT to give a sense of the magnitude.

There is pressure on schemes to address those detrimentally impacted first, especially ill-health cases; good and timely communication to all members will also be critical. As this exercise is critical there is limited time to fully train someone with no pensions, management experience or who are not used to working in a demanding business area i.e. it takes over 1 year for someone to be effective in the work in pensions. Staff who have been appointed directly at SO level to this business area, with no pension's knowledge have encountered difficulties and significant pressure. The most recent SO postings to the Operational side of Civil Service Pension has been staff experienced in pension and this has been of great benefit to the business and ensured that all critical work and targets have been maintained without major disruption to the business. The criteria outlined above is essential as it means that the person taking on the role is under no misconception of what is required of them, the level of pressure they will be under to deliver to tight timescales and that management of staffing resources is critical to success.

- **Do these criteria favour individuals already working in the area where the vacancy exists?**

While the criteria is public service pensions specific, it is not Civil Service Pensions specific. There are staff within the NICS who have pensions experience e.g. Teachers Pensions and staff who no longer work in pensions but can meet the requirements to apply. **Note:** Teachers will also require additional resources and may also lift of this pool.

- **What are the specialist skills or aptitudes considered essential for this post (over and above the competences for the grade)?**

Management of staff in a complex public service pensions operational environment and meeting tight deadlines. Also knowledge of public service pensions and working in a high pressured customer facing environment.

- **Why could this post not be filled through the normal vacancy management processes?**

Individuals will most likely have no pensions experience or experience of working in an operational delivery environment. In normal circumstances i.e. steady state CSP have used the normal vacancy management process however, most SOs appointed with no pensions experience did struggle which had an impact on the business. The most recent SOs appointed to Pensions have been those with pensions experience and this has been of significant benefit to the business.

The delivery of McCloud and Business as Usual is critical and high profile, therefore it is necessary that the staff are competent in pensions and be in a position to support their teams to take the McCloud remedy forward and ensure that business as usual can be delivered. There is limited time to fully train individuals who have no pension's knowledge or who are not used to working in a demanding business area i.e. it takes over 1 year for someone to be effective in the work in pensions. The criteria outlined above are essential as it means that the person taking on the role is under no misconception of what is required of them and the level of pressure they will be under to deliver to tight timescales, which is critical to success.

It would also be unfair for an individual to be put into this position and also disruptive for the business when resilient staff are required who have proved that they can cope with this type of work environment.

- **What type and duration of training would be required for staff without the specialist qualifications, skills, experience etc to carry out the role?**

It would take in excess of one year to complete the pension's specialised training required to ensure a level of competency is attained.

- **Will successful applicants receive full training?**

The expectation would be that applicants with the required experience will already have a solid background of pensions and working in a public service pension's operational environment – where there are gaps, from the identified training requirements this will be addressed through formal training and peer support. This may also include additional training in staff management.

- **Has the business area appointed through means other than a trawl competition in the past? If so, why would this not be appropriate in this case?**

Yes, in normal circumstances i.e. steady state CSP have used the normal vacancy management process however, as detailed above SOs appointed with no pensions experience did struggle which had an impact on the business. The most recent SOs appointed to Pensions have been those with pensions experience and this has been of significant benefit to the business. In the current circumstances the business is dealing with a critical high profile exercise it is necessary that the staff are competent in pensions and be in a position to support their teams to take the McCloud remedy forward and ensure that business as usual can be delivered.

There is limited time to fully train individuals who have no pension's knowledge or who are not used to working in a demanding business area i.e. it takes over 1 year for someone to be effective in the work in pensions. The criteria outlined above are essential as it means that the person taking on the role is under no misconception of what is required of them and the level of pressure they will be under to deliver to tight timescales, which is critical to success.

It would be unfair for the individual to be put into this position and also disruptive for the business when they need resilient staff who have proved that they can cope with this type of work environment.

- **Who would the potential candidate pool be? Are there pools of staff across the NICS who would have the experience required for this post?**

Staff who work or who have worked in a public service pension's environment and have staff management experience e.g. Civil Service Pensions, Teachers Pensions and staff who no longer work in pensions but can meet the requirements to apply.

- **Have any other means to fill the post been considered (i.e. redistribution of work, staff from other branches, pause/stop work etc)?**

Yes – no surplus at SO level within the Division. Currently no one with pensions experience on SO external competition list.

Re-distribution of work is not a viable options as all SO posts are fully loaded and this is new additional work for the CSP business areas while ensuring business as usual is still maintained.

This work is new work emanating from a Court of Appeal decision on age discrimination (McCloud ruling) impacting across the public sector so pausing or stopping activities is not an option. Business as usual also has to continue.

- **Have you consulted with TUS regarding the desire to commence a Trawl competition to fill this vacancy? NICSHR would encourage early consultation with TUS in all cases where a Trawl is felt to be the most appropriate method to fill.**

Yes - The filling of posts by trawl at all levels has been discussed with the LTUS and they have indicated that they would be supportive of trawls being used to fill vacancies at all levels.

It should be noted that the above is **not** a definitive list, and further information may be required to determine if a Trawl is the most appropriate method to fill.

All relevant information, including responses to the above, should be sent to NICSHR.Resourcing@finance-ni.gov.uk and copied to the HR Business Partners.