

INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY

Para
2.6

2.6 Independent scrutiny is a mandatory element of every competition. No appointment may be made, unless an Independent Assessor has been involved in the process. At the beginning of August 2004, OCPA NI took over **from** Departments the responsibility for the selection, training and administration of Independent Assessors, in order to increase public confidence in the system of independent scrutiny and ensure that there is a consistent approach to payment and performance appraisal across all Departments.

Para
2.7

2.7 ~~Further~~ details of the new process can be found at Annex I, but the broad principles of the new system are set out below.

- The Commissioner has set up a central pool of Independent Assessors, recruited through open competition, using a competence-based selection process, which included an interview. Independent Assessors undergo induction training before they can act in the Assessor capacity.
- All appointments run under either the Commissioner's "Regulated" or "Monitored" **Kitemark** schemes (**see** Annex B) must include the involvement of an Assessor **from** the central pool. Departments can no longer **recruit** their own **Assessor** for these competitions. The Commissioner also encourages Departments to consider using the central pool **Assessors** for any appointments processes which fall outside the **Kitemark** schemes.
- At the earliest stage of the setting up of a competition, Departments should contact OCPA NI **staff**, who will then allocate **an** Assessor to that competition. Assessors are allocated by OCPA NI on a rotational basis, as far as is possible,
- Departments continue to be responsible for paying Independent Assessor's fees.

- There is an appraisal system to monitor the performance of Independent Assessors.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

2.8 The principles of equal opportunity and diversity are not only socially just, but will benefit any board to which they are applied. Individuals **from** all sections of society may have much to offer a public body, by virtue of their diverse experience and background. Departments should ensure, in the appointments process, that they comply with the statutory duty under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity (between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without) and that they have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group.

2.9 The principles of equal opportunity and diversity must be inherent within the appointments process. Departments must also take care not to **unlawfully** discriminate against any group.

2.10 Departments should take appropriate action, wherever possible, to attract suitable candidates **from** all sections of society, and this in turn, should lead to wider representation on public bodies. Those involved in the appointments process must, however, ensure that any initiative or action they take to encourage or achieve wider representation is within the law.