

CPANI

The Commissioner
for Public Appointments
Northern Ireland

“Guardian of the Public Appointment Process”

ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

www.publicappointmentsni.org



Contacting Us

If this document is not in a format that meets your needs please contact the CPA NI Office.

This document is also available on the following internet site:

<http://www.publicappointmentsni.org>

You can contact us at the address below or by:

E-mail: **info@publicappointmentsni.org**

Telephone: **028 9052 4820**

Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland

Annexe B

Dundonald House

Stormont Estate

Belfast

BT4 3SB

Contents

	Page
1. Commissioner's Introduction	5
2. Executive summary	11
3. Vision and values of CPA NI	14
3.1 Vision	14
3.2 Values	14
4. Role of CPA NI	15
4.1 Legislation	15
4.2 Mission statement	15
4.3 What does the Commissioner do?	15
4.4 How does the Commissioner regulate public appointments?	15
4.5 CPA NI Organisation structure	17
5. The Code of Practice	18
5.1 Introduction	18
5.2 Changes to the Code	18
5.3 Regulated and unregulated competitions	18
5.4 Compliance with the Code in 2014/15	19
6. Independent Assessors (IAs)	22
6.1 Role of IA	22
6.2 Performance of IAs and feedback from Departments	22
7. Public Appointment Activity 2014/15	24
7.1 Appointments and reappointments	24
7.2 Extensions	24
7.3 Exceptions to the Code	25
8. CPA NI Activity 2014/15	26
8.1 Introduction	26
8.2 Business planning	26
8.3 Audit and compliance programme 2014/15	27
8.4 Dealing with complaints	29
8.5 The CPA NI Website	30



Annexes

[I]	List, from each Government Department, of Bodies to which regulated and unregulated appointments are made	31
[II]	CPA NI Operating Plan 1 st April 2015 to 31 st March 2016	36
[III]	Statement of Expenditure	42
[IV]	The 26 recommendations of the Commissioner's January 2014 report 'Under-Representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland'.	44

1. Commissioner's Introduction

I am pleased to present my report for the year to March 2015.

This will be my last report as Commissioner as I have decided to step down from the post on 31st July 2015, when I will have served four years.

I will begin by thanking my core staff members, Pat Neeson, Paddy Longmore and Michael Knox for their outstanding support to me throughout the year. Their professionalism, knowledge and consistency have ensured that CPA NI has provided a high standard of service at all times.



I wish also to thank the team of Independent Assessors who are my 'eyes and ears' in every public appointment recruitment competition. The feedback that I receive from Departments after each competition has confirmed that the Assessors have contributed significantly to the smooth and proper running of the public appointment process.

In this introduction, I will reflect mainly on the three most important aspects of the work of CPA NI, i.e my regulatory role as Commissioner, the provision of advice and guidance to Departments and others, and the effort to improve diversity and combat under-representation on the boards of public bodies. I will also comment on the strength of my remit as Commissioner and how it might be improved for my successor.

The regulatory role

Regulation of public appointments is centred on my Code of Practice. CPA NI audits six competitions each year and follows these up with Departments to ensure that any recommendations for improvement have been implemented. In general, this process is proving effective, with most recommendations being implemented, leading to improvements in the process.

However, I am concerned that, when a third-party contractor has been used to administer competitions in place of Department officials, there has been an



unacceptably high level of error leading to breaches of the Code and examples of poor practice and, worse still, the lessons from earlier audits do not appear to have been learned, meaning that CPA NI is seeing the same mistakes repeated. It is imperative that OFMDFM, with its responsibility for public appointment policy, and any other Department using the third-party contractor, gets to grips with the problem as a matter of urgency.

Advice to Departments and others

This aspect of the work of CPA NI has been particularly successful. My staff and I have built strong and productive relationships with the Departments, and the Departments have been most willing to take advantage of my 'open door policy' under which potential problems with competitions can be discussed and resolved before any mistakes are made or damage done. This approach is much more helpful to Departments, and ultimately to candidates for appointment, than CPA NI standing back, letting competitions run, and waiting to pick up mistakes and report on them in audits after the event.

As well as advice to Departments, my staff and I have engaged in a substantial outreach programme, advising a wide range of organisations on how their members can gear up for competing successfully in public appointment competitions.

Lack of Diversity/Under-Representation on the boards of public bodies

This is the area of work that disappoints me most. The statistics for under-represented groupings, including women, people under 30 years of age, people from our ethnic minority communities and people with a disability remain stubbornly unchanged except for minor fluctuations. On my visits to women's groups, young people's groups, trade union organisations, business organisations and third-sector organisations, I get the same message, delivered to me with increasing frustration – that message is that they perceive the public appointment process as being biased against their members, to the extent that many talented people are put off applying for public appointments.

It is rare to get an identical message, on any topic, from such a diverse range of interests, and it is clear to me that these people see no progress by Government and its Departments, on 'widening the net' to get a more diverse



range of applicants coming forward for appointment. I have to say that I share the frustration of those organisations and agree that little visible progress has been made in the 17 years since the Good Friday Agreement, which was supposed to herald a new era of inclusion in Northern Ireland.

It is clear also that little visible progress has been made by Government on implementing my January 2014 report 'Under-Representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland'.

I presented that report to the Head of the Civil Service and his Permanent Secretaries group in January 2014; in July 2014 I received a detailed response which concluded that the report's 26 recommendations, for improving the public appointment process, were feasible, but most of the recommendations were listed, by OFMDFM in that response, for implementation in the 'medium to long term'. It is true that some individual Departments are trying to improve how they reach out to a wider range of potential candidates for appointment, and one Department has declared its intention to strive for parity on boards between women and men, but there is no indication, almost a year and a half after publication of my report, that a focussed, coordinated programme to implement the recommendations is imminent.

That is not good enough. By now there should have been a paper to the Northern Ireland Executive for its consideration, developing policy and actions based on the report's 26 recommendations, bringing the issue properly into the political and public domain and demonstrating to the public that the Government is aware of the problem and is taking action to overcome it.

This inaction is unfair not only to potential candidates who are put off applying; it is also unfair to the many dedicated and talented individuals who are appointed, on merit, to public boards, but through a process that attracts so much criticism from so many sources.

I urge the officials responsible for this work to accelerate its progress. Recent communication, to me from the First and deputy First Ministers, indicates that they 'acknowledge my concerns', they 'recognise that some sections of our society are under-represented on the boards of public bodies' and they remain committed to 'achieving greater diversity in public appointments'.

On that basis, and despite what I see as being a strong resistance to change



which has held back progress for many years, across the tenures of three Commissioners including myself, I continue to be hopeful that the public may yet see some action.

[I have attached a copy of the 26 recommendations at Appendix IV. The full report can be accessed on the CPA NI website www.publicappointmentsni.org]

Commissioner's remit

The legislation which established my post is now 19 years old and, as I mentioned in my report last year, is in need of some improvement if it is to equip the new Commissioner with the powers needed to carry out the role effectively in the years to come. In March 2014, after I had made representations to OFMDFM, the First and deputy First Ministers agreed to initiate a consultation process on the Commissioner's statutory remit. In May 2014 I submitted, to OFMDFM, my suggestions for strengthening and updating the legislation.

Much of what I suggested, including formal inclusion of a CPA NI role in diversity and its role in reappointments, has been accepted and will be the basis of updated legislation being prepared for the Executive.

It is somewhat disappointing that one of the suggestions, that the review should encompass an examination of the Scottish model, has not been accepted by the officials. I suggested this because the Scottish Parliament was able to help overcome public and political doubts, about the strength and effectiveness of the Scottish Commissioner's legislation and remit.

The same doubts have been expressed to me many times by politicians and members of the public, about the strength and effectiveness of the Northern Ireland Commissioner's legislation and remit.

The Scottish Cabinet has strengthened the role of its Commissioner by [1] making it mandatory that the Commissioner reports, to the Parliament, any breaches of his Code and [2] the Commissioner has the authority to halt a competition and refer the matter to the Parliament for consideration if he identifies a 'substantive' breach of the Code, i.e. one that would potentially distort the outcome of a public appointment competition. This power, used



very rarely, enables the Scottish Commissioner to intervene effectively when necessary and helps to increase transparency in the Scottish Parliament about the conduct of public appointment competitions.

I feel that our politicians should be given the opportunity to understand this aspect of the Scottish model and decide for themselves if it would be helpful here.

As with the Diversity report, the review of the Commissioner's remit is taking a very long time. I look forward to seeing the completion of the review process, leading to greater clarity and effectiveness for my successor in the Commissioner post.

Conclusion

I am pleased that, during my time in the Commissioner post I have been able to upgrade the regulatory aspects of the work of CPA NI, including an updated Code of Practice, the appointment and training of an effective new team of Independent Assessors for public appointment competitions, and an improved audit process with a follow-up regime to ensure that recommendations for improvement are implemented by the Departments. My staff and I have also built strong cooperative relationships with the Departments to help ensure that pitfalls are avoided when they are recruiting public appointees and candidates are given every opportunity to compete in a fair, merit-based process.

I am confident that the CPA NI process of regulation is fit for purpose in the coming months and years.

I am content that, by means of my report on diversity and under-representation on the boards of public bodies, the pertinent issues, and the impediments to greater diversity, have been identified. If the long-awaited Executive paper is delivered and the Executive and the Assembly are thereby able to commit to the required action, I am hopeful that the culture of the public appointment process can be changed for the better and the public can begin to believe more in the fairness and openness of the process and believe that a more representative range of citizens can play a part in running our public organisations. In the drive for 'participative democracy' and an inclusive society, this is a prize worth aiming for.



Finally, I look forward to seeing my successor as Commissioner move forward in this challenging but fulfilling role, with an enhanced mandate based on new legislation, a diversity action plan led from the top of Government and embedded in the next Programme for Government, and the full cooperation and support of the political and administrative components of Stormont.

John Keanie
Commissioner.

2. Executive Summary

Section 1 – Commissioner’s Introduction

- Commissioner stepping down on 31st July 2015, after serving four years.
- Thanks to CPA NI staff and Independent Assessors for their work.
- Concern about quality of work on competitions administered by third-party contractor.
- Strong, productive relationships between CPA NI and Departments.
- CPA NI advice-giving service proving particularly successful.
- Substantial outreach programme by Commissioner and staff.
- Commissioner’s disappointment at lack of progress by Government on addressing lack of diversity and under-representation on boards. Pressing need for implementation of the 26 recommendations in the Commissioner’s January 2014 report.
- Government should complete the review of the Commissioner’s remit, strengthen the remit as necessary and look at the Scottish model which requires the Scottish Commissioner to report Code breaches to the Parliament and gives him the authority to halt a public appointment competition in serious cases, referring it to the Parliament.

Sections 3 and 4 – Vision, Values and Role of CPA NI

These are set out for readers.

Section 5 – The Code of Practice

- Important change to Paragraph 3.38d of Code, regarding the handling of potential conflict of interest or integrity matters, to ensure that the Minister is properly informed before making an appointment decision.
- Regulated or unregulated? – The presumption now is that appointments to any new body will be regulated by CPA NI unless specifically designated by the Minister as unregulated. It is now standard practice for unregulated competitions to be run ‘in accordance with the principles of the Code’, with



CPA NI allocating an Independent Assessor to the recruitment panel.

- Compliance with the Code was good in five of six competitions audited by CPA NI. One competition ‘failed to a substantial degree to comply with the Code of Practice’.
- Recurring breaches of the Code include:
 - Departments not keeping candidates informed of progress of their applications.
 - Departments seeking names of candidates on Monitoring Forms, which should be anonymous.
 - Extraneous information [i.e. information not supplied by candidate on application form or at interview] being brought in to some competitions.
 - Some Departments still asking candidates for a list of past employment/appointments, rather than asking them to incorporate such information into their answers on the competencies.
 - Too many mistakes in competitions administered by a third-party supplier.

Section 6 – Independent Assessors

- CPA NI allocated Independent Assessors to 70 public appointment competitions.
- All reviews of Independent Assessors’ performance have been positive to strongly positive and have highlighted the value of the Assessors to the public appointment process.

Section 7 – Public Appointment Activity 2014/15

- 213 public appointment positions were advertised by Departments.
- There were 50 reappointments.
- Eight Departments granted a total of 37 extensions to terms of appointment of board members.
- The Commissioner granted four exceptions to the Code, to three Departments.



Section 8 – CPA NI Activity 2014/15

- Continued high demand by Departments and others for advice from CPA NI – over 400 formal queries.
- Strong outreach programme continued by Commissioner – 75 meetings with wide range of organisations and individuals.
- Commissioner spoke at many events.
- CPA NI achieved the objectives set out in its 2014/15 Operating Plan.
- CPA NI completed its programme of auditing six public appointment competitions and conducting reviews on the implementation of recommendations of previous audits. Details of audits and reviews are listed in this section.
- The Commissioner investigated two complaints. Details are provided in this section.

The report ends with four annexes:

- [i] List, from each Department, of bodies to which regulated and unregulated appointments are made.
- [ii] CPA NI Operating Plan April 2015 to March 2016.
- [iii] Statement of Expenditure.
- [iv] The 26 recommendations of the Commissioner's January 2014 report 'Under-Representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland'.



3. Vision and Values of CPA NI

3.1 Vision

The CPA NI vision is that all public appointments are made on merit, in a fair and open manner and that opportunities to serve on the boards of public bodies are open to the widest possible field of candidates.

3.2 Values

The core values of CPA NI are those that are also expected of Ministers and their Departments in making public appointments. They are:

Merit

Diversity

Equality of Opportunity

Openness, Transparency and Independence

Integrity

Proportionality

Respect

4. Role of CPA NI

4.1 Legislation

The post of Commissioner was established in 1995 by the 'Commissioner for Public Appointments [Northern Ireland] Order' [the Order], which has been amended on two occasions to take account of the progressive devolution of powers and duties to the N.I. Executive.

4.2 CPA NI Mission Statement

- to regulate and monitor the policies and procedures of Ministers and their Departments in making public appointments,
- to ensure that Departments operate systems that allow every citizen who has skills and experience to contribute and who has the motivation and integrity to serve, to put himself/herself forward for appointment, and
- to ensure that applicants are treated, throughout the public appointment process, in a manner that is fair, consistent, open and transparent, with the goal of selecting the best candidates, on merit, for board service.

4.3 What does the Commissioner do?

The Commissioner regulates and monitors the compliance of Departments with the Commissioner's 'Code of Practice for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland' [the Code]. He also provides advice and guidance on the process of selection for public appointments and he investigates complaints.

4.4 How does the Commissioner regulate public appointments?

The Order, which can be viewed on the CPA NI website on the 'Our Role' page, sets out formally the statutory duties of the Commissioner as:

1. The Commissioner shall in the manner he considers best calculated to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the procedures for making public appointments, exercise his functions with the object of maintaining the principle of selection on merit in relation to public appointments.
2. The Commissioner shall prescribe and publish a Code of Practice on the

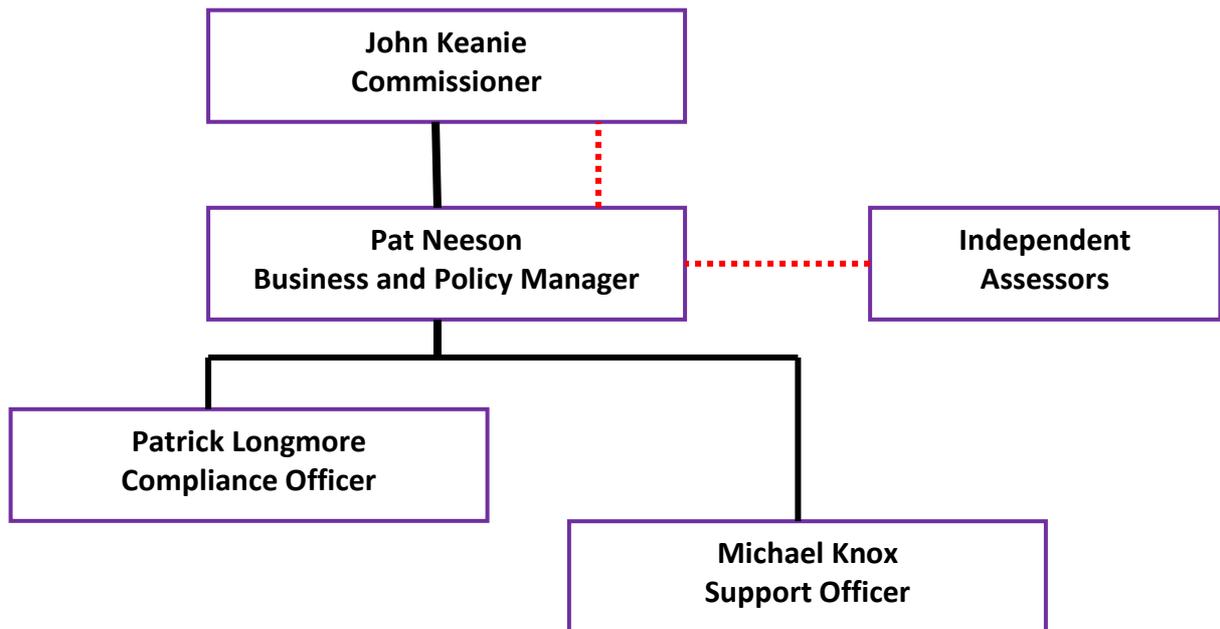


interpretation and application by Departments of Government on the principle of selection on merit for public appointments and shall adopt and publish from time to time such additional guidance as the Commissioner shall think fit.

3. The Commissioner shall carry out an audit to review the policies and practices of Departments in making public appointments to establish whether the Code of Practice referred to in paragraph 2 is being observed.
4. The Commissioner may require any Department to publish such summary information relating to selection for public appointments as he may specify in writing.
5. The Commissioner may from time to time conduct an inquiry into the policies and practices pursued by a Department in relation to any public appointment or description of any public appointment.
6. The Commissioner shall publish an annual report which shall include -
 - a. information as to the application by Departments of the principle of selection on merit in relation to public appointments and as to the observance by Departments of the Code of Practice, and
 - b. an account of the audit of policies and practices of Departments in making public appointments.

4.5 CPA NI Organisation Structure

The Commissioner operates with a small team of officers who report to him through the Business and Policy Manager. In addition, a team of around 38 Independent Assessors is managed by the Commissioner. Section 6 of this report deals with Independent Assessors.



The Office team

[Left to right – Patrick Longmore, Pat Neeson and Michael Knox]



5. The Code of Practice

5.1 Introduction

The Order requires the Commissioner to ‘prescribe and publish a Code of Practice on the interpretation and application by Departments of the principle of selection on merit for public appointments’. CPA NI regulates and monitors the work of the Departments to ensure they comply with the Code.

5.2 Changes to the Code

The Commissioner amends the Code from time to time to ensure that it is up-to-date and relevant. The current version of the Code [which can be accessed on the Home Page of the CPA NI website www.publicappointmentsni.org] is JK4 with the addition of a new page 20 and 21, labelled JK4.1. This version came into force in May 2015.

It contains a brief but important addition to paragraph 3.38d, included to ensure that the panels which shortlist and interview candidates take steps to properly examine any potential conflict of interest, or integrity matter, effecting a candidate, including when there has been information in the public domain which indicates a possible problem. This is to ensure that the Minister, who makes the ultimate appointment decisions, is properly informed about any matters of concern.

Additional guidance, interpretation and answers to questions about the Code and the public appointment process in general can be found in the ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ section of the website.

5.3 Regulated and Unregulated Competitions

Public appointments can be ‘regulated’ by the Commissioner or ‘unregulated’. The presumption now is that any new body being set up by any Department will have its board appointment process regulated by the Commissioner unless the Minister responsible decides, for a specific reason, that it should be unregulated.

It is now standard practice that all public appointment competitions for



unregulated bodies are run ‘in accordance with the principles of the Code’, and include an Independent Assessor on the panel, appointed by the Commissioner.

Unfortunately, it is still the case that, unlike in regulated competitions, a candidate with a complaint cannot have the complaint investigated by the Commissioner. The Commissioner has made the case, to OFMDFM [the Department responsible for developing policy on public appointments] that this is potentially unfair to candidates in unregulated competitions and that it could lead to unequal treatment. In response, OFMDFM has highlighted the difficulty, mainly centred on the lack of authority of the Commissioner in unregulated appointments, of having CPA NI investigate such complaints. The ‘compromise position’ has been to ensure that as few as possible of public appointment competitions are unregulated. The Commissioner intends that this situation should be kept under review, to ascertain if complainants/potential complainants in forthcoming competitions are disadvantaged by the arrangement, a situation that would call for a new approach by OFMDFM on the matter.

Annexe 1 gives the current list of public bodies, supplied by each Department, showing which bodies are regulated and which unregulated.

5.4 Compliance with the Code in 2014/15

There was generally a good level of compliance with the Code, in five of the six competitions audited by CPA NI. One competition ‘failed to a substantial degree to Comply with the Code of Practice’, having six breaches of the Code identified, with a further nine matters listed as ‘less than best practice’. Two competitions gained commendations from CPA NI for the efforts made by the Departments concerned to attract a wider range of candidates, evidence that, in the absence of an overall plan by Government to address this important issue, Departments have begun to make their own individual efforts.

All six audit reports, plus follow-up reports on two previous audits, can be accessed, in full, on the ‘Investigations’ page of the website.

In the six audit reports, CPA NI produced a total of 36 recommendations for improvement. CPA NI will conduct follow-ups with each Department to ensure



that the recommendations are implemented and will publish details of its findings.

Some mistakes and Code breaches are occurring across the Departments, indicating that the work being carried out by 'The Public Appointments Forum' is not yet fully effective. The Forum, comprising mainly civil servants from each Department who have a role in public appointments processes, was set up with the main aim of ensuring that best practice in public appointments is shared across the 12 Departments of Government and poor practice eradicated.

Some examples of recurring problems are:

1. Candidates in too many competitions are not being informed regularly about the progress of their applications, particularly at the final, Ministerial stage which is prone to delay. It has not been uncommon for there to be a gap of several weeks or even months between candidates being interviewed and the next communication they receive, letting them know of their success or failure.
2. Monitoring forms sometimes ask for the names of candidates. These forms, developed solely to facilitate analysis of the types of candidate, e.g. religious/community background, ethnicity etc. contain sensitive information which is not part of the public appointment process. They should always be anonymous.
3. Extraneous information is sometimes allowed to creep into the appointment process, i.e. information which is not supplied by the candidate in his/her application form or interview answers. This must be avoided, the exception being when the panel knows that a matter of a potential conflict of interest or an integrity issue regarding a candidate is not highlighted by the candidate but is in the public domain. Paragraph 3.38d of the Code, in the new version issued in May 2015, deals with this matter and a new publication from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, 'Conflicts of Interest – A Good Practice Guide' is particularly useful for panel members and Department officials.
4. Some Departments still ask candidates for a list of their current and



previous employment history. It is the view of many, including CPA NI, that, in the context of the public appointment process, where an important aim is to widen the net of candidates applying for board positions, including people with a less 'traditional' career background who may have new techniques and fresh perspectives, the old 'list style' question on career history is a retrograde step which gives an unfair advantage to, for example, retired men who can provide an impressive list of senior [often public sector] positions, from which panels can easily draw unsubstantiated conclusions about the supposed ability of the candidate.

Public appointment decisions are based on a 'competence-based' process, where the merit of candidates for each board position is judged through their answers to questions carefully designed to gauge their ability against a set of criteria deemed necessary for effective membership of the particular board. Candidates should, therefore, be asked to include their employment experiences as part of their answers to those questions.

There is then a chance that candidates [men/women, young/old, and from whatever background] can be assessed for competence and merit on a more equal footing.

5. There is an urgent need for the relationship between a third-party supplier [used to administer some public appointment competitions in place of Departmental officials] and Departments to be managed more effectively. As the Commissioner pointed out in last year's Annual Report, there are far too many mistakes being made in those competitions; the competition mentioned above, with six Code breaches and nine examples of 'less than best practice', is one of them.

Whether the errors are being made by the Department or the third-party supplier, the responsibility for the correct administration of each competition lies with the Department, which must take the necessary steps to get the process right.

6. Independent Assessors

6.1 Role of the Independent Assessor

Independent Assessors play an important part in the public appointment process. They serve on every regulated public appointment recruitment panel, bringing expertise, independence and experience in

CPA NI allocated Independent Assessors to 70 public appointment competitions in 2014/15

recruitment matters and on the Commissioner's Code. They also serve on the panels of unregulated competitions. They serve as full voting members of the panels and are required to be engaged from the planning stages of the recruitment competition. They help the Department to get the planning and documentation right and to sift and short-list candidates. They take part in interviews. They also jointly approve, with the other panel members, the applicant summaries that go to the Minister recommending candidates suitable for appointment.

Independent Assessors have a duty to challenge the panel and the Department when they identify deviation from the Code and from best-practice, and to refer the problem to the Department and to the Commissioner as necessary. After each competition, the Independent Assessor completes a review of the competition, highlighting to the Commissioner any points of concern. All issues raised by the Assessor are followed up by CPA NI.

All Independent Assessors are committed to the merit principle and to fair treatment of candidates. They have open access to the Commissioner and his team to ensure that difficulties encountered by Departments and panels are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Independent Assessors are allocated to each competition by CPA NI. They are managed, trained and monitored by CPA NI.

6.2 Performance of Independent Assessors and feedback from Departments

CPA NI conducted four training sessions for Independent Assessors during the



year, to ensure the Assessors are up-to-date on Code changes and all other matters effecting public appointment competitions.

After each competition, the Department completes a short evaluation, for the Commissioner, of the part played by the Assessor. Any matters of concern are raised, by CPA NI, with the Assessor and/or included in subsequent training sessions. Also, the Commissioner meets, twice a year, the officers, from all Departments, who work on public appointments; they have the opportunity to raise matters concerning them, including the performance of Independent Assessors on their recruitment panels.

In the 2014/15 year all Departmental evaluations of the Assessors have been positive to strongly positive and have highlighted the value of the Independent Assessor role to the public appointment process.

7. Public Appointment Activity 2014/15

7.1 Appointments and reappointments

As the figures in the boxes show, 263 public appointment positions were available for appointment or reappointment during the year.

213 public appointment positions advertised in 2014/2015

Department Press Releases showed 50 reappointments in 2014/2015

7.2 Extensions

Whilst there was a considerable number of extensions of appointment [37] over the year, the Commissioner is content that, in the circumstances, they were justified. Extensions are organised by Departments in a range of situations, for example when an organisation is being reconstituted and it would be inappropriate to recruit new board members until the reconstitution is complete.

8 Departments granted a total of 37 extensions in 2014/2015

All extensions by Departments are required to be notified to the Commissioner, together with the reason for the extension. The Departments must also announce every extension to the public, the same as with new appointments.

CPA NI keeps a careful eye on the use of extensions and will step in where it believes the extension is either too long or unnecessary altogether. In the 2014/15 year the Departments tended increasingly to discuss their extension requirements with CPA NI in advance of implementing them. The Commissioner would encourage this practice, which has ensured, in many instances, that potential difficulties are avoided.

7.3 Exceptions to the Code

Departments wishing to depart from any aspect of the Code in a particular competition must obtain written permission from the Commissioner to do so. Every case is carefully considered and exceptions are not granted lightly.

Four exceptions were granted by the Commissioner, in three Departments, in the 2014/15 year. These were:

DEPARTMENT	PUBLIC BODY	NATURE OF EXCEPTION
DE	Belfast Education and Library Board	Emergency Appointment for four members.
DE	Youth Council for Northern Ireland	Emergency Appointment of two interim members.
DHSSPS	Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service	CPA NI agreed special press release arrangements.
DOJ	Police retraining and rehabilitation Trust	Extension of time limit for reserve list.

8. CPA NI Activity 2014/15

8.1 Introduction

The 'open-door' approach of CPA NI has resulted in a continuing increase in Departments and others seeking advice and guidance from CPA NI. It is clear that this has resulted in many potential problems being avoided. CPA NI will continue to offer this service to all who require it.

CPA NI handled over 400 formal queries

The Commissioner's policy of making himself and his officials available to organisations, to explain what public appointments are, how to identify opportunities and how to go for them, resulted in many requests for meetings and for the Commissioner to speak at events.

Commissioner attended 75 meetings with wide range of organisations and individuals and published articles promoting public appointments.

CPA NI outreach included:

- **Disability Action**
- **Employers for childcare**
- **Irish Congress of Trade Unions**
- **Law Society**
- **Rainbow Project**
- **Royal National Institute for the Blind**
- **Women's Inspirational Network**
- **Young Influencers**
- **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

8.2 Business planning

CPA NI creates an Operating Plan each year, in which objectives are identified and for which resources are sought. The CPA NI team conducts regular reviews of its performance against the plan and takes corrective action. In the 2014/15 year CPA NI achieved all of its Operating Plan targets.

The plan for the 2015/16 year is at Annexe II of this report and can also be found on the website on the 'Publications' page.



8.3 Audit and compliance programme 2014/15

CPA NI completed the following audits of public appointment recruitment competitions during the year. Departments are required to deal with all issues identified.

CPA NI had intended to conduct a follow-up review of each audit after six months, to ensure that the Departments are implementing its recommendations for improvement. In practice, because not all Departments need to run a further public appointment competition within a six-month period, the six-month review plan is impracticable. CPA NI will continue to review every audit, but will time each review as appropriate for each Department's circumstances.

All audit and follow-up reports can be viewed in full in the 'Investigations and Compliance' page of the website.

Audit reports:

Department	Public Body	Competition	Audit Report Date
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	Livestock and Meat Commission	Appointment of one member	June 2014
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Patient and Client Council	Appointment of four non-executive members	August 2014
Department for Employment and Learning	Governing Body of the North West Regional College	Appointment of Chair	September 2014
Department for Regional Development	Belfast Harbour Commissioners	Appointment of Chair	February 2015
Department of the Environment	Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland	Appointment of eleven members	March 2015
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland	Appointment of a Commissioner	March 2015

Follow-up reports:

Department	Public Body	Competition	Follow-up Report Date
DCAL	NI Screen	Appointment of Chair	June 2014
DE	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment	Appointment of members	October 2014



In addition to the CPA NI audit programme, the Permanent Secretary of each Department submits an 'Annual Compliance Statement' to the Commissioner.

8.4 Dealing with complaints

The Commissioner has a duty to investigate complaints about public appointment processes. In most cases, he will require the complainant to have referred the complaint, in the first instance, to the Department concerned. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Department's handling of the complaint, he/she may refer it to the Commissioner for investigation.

Each Department reports, annually, to the Commissioner, details of complaints/challenges received and handled by them. The Departmental reports for 2014/15 show that seven Departments handled a total of 21 complaints/challenges.

In the 2014/15 year, two complaints were submitted to the Commissioner for investigation. The details are as follows.

Department: OFMDFM

Public Body: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland

Nature of Complaint: A seven part complaint relating to the decision by the Department not to arrange an alternative interview date for candidate.

Date complaint received by CPA NI: July 2014

Outcome: Two parts upheld, five parts not upheld

Department: DEL

Public Body: Governing Body of Northern Regional College

Nature of Complaint: Non-reappointment of the Chairman.

Date complaint received by CPA NI: January 2015

Outcome: No breach of Code by Minister but three recommendations from CPA NI for improvement of process by the Department

With the agreement of the complainant, the complaint report has been published in full on the CPA NI website.

8.5 The CPA NI Website, www.publicappointmentsni.org

The website has been developed into a much used source of information on public appointments and on the work of CPA NI. It contains information on the role of CPA NI, the latest version of the Code and unabridged versions of CPA NI reports [the only exception being that complaint reports are published anonymously if the complainant asks for this].

Average 725 visitors per month to www.publicappointmentsni.org

The Homepage contains a 'Latest' column in which the latest changes, reports, and 'Frequently Asked Questions' are flagged up.

ANNEXE I

List, from each Government Department, of bodies to which regulated and unregulated appointments are made.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Wages Board for NI • Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute • Drainage Council • Fishery Harbour Authority [NI] • Livestock and Meat Commission for NI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-Food Strategy Board [sponsored jointly with DETI] • TB Strategic Partnership Group • CAFRE College Advisory Group
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architecture & Built Environment Ministerial Advisory Group for NI • Armagh Observatory & Planetarium Board of Governors • Armagh Observatory & Planetarium Management Committee • Arts Council of NI • National Museums and Galleries of NI • NI Library Authority [Libraries NI] • NI Museums Council • NI Screen • Sport NI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulster Scots Academy Ministerial Advisory Group • W5 Limited – Board of Trustees

Department of Education	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Authority • Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta • Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the Diocesan Education Committees of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools • General Teaching Council Northern Ireland • NI Council for Integrated Education • NI Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment • Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee [Schools] • Youth Council for NI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional Circumstances Body • Governing Bodies of Certain Voluntary Grammar Schools • Grant Maintained Integrated Schools - Boards of Governors • Middletown Centre for Autism • NI Teachers' Pension Scheme Pension Board
Department for Employment and Learning	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification Officer for NI • CITB – Construction Skills NI • Governing Bodies of Further Education Colleges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Belfast Metropolitan College – Northern Regional College – North West Regional College – South Eastern Regional College – South West Regional College – Southern Regional College • Governing Body of St Mary's University College • Governing Body of Stranmillis University College • Labour Relations Agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair Employment Tribunal • Industrial Court NI • Industrial Tribunals • NI Commissioner for Employment and Skills • Reinstatement Committee for Reserve Forces in Civil Employment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulster Supported Employment Limited 	
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Consumer Council for NI • Health and Safety Executive for NI • Invest NI • Tourism Northern Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-Food Strategy Board [sponsored jointly with DARD] • NI Co-operation Overseas • NI Science Park
Department of Finance and Personnel	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI Authority for Utility Regulation • NI Building Regulations Advisory Committee • NI Statistics Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lay Observer for NI • The Public Service Commission for NI • The NI Civil Service Pension Board
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Services Organisation • Health and Social Care Board • Health and Social Care Trusts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Belfast Health & Social Care Trust – NI Ambulance Service Trust – Northern Health & Social Care Trust – South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust – Southern Health & Social Care Trust – Western Health & Social Care Trust • NI Blood Transfusion Service • NI Fire and Rescue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive of the Food Safety Promotion Board • Dental and Ophthalmic Committees • Food Standards Agency • Human Tissue Authority • NI Committee for Postgraduate Pharmaceutical Education and Training • Ophthalmic Qualifications Committee • Pharmaceutical Society

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency • NI Medical and Dental Training Agency • NI Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery • NI Social Care Council • Patient and Client Council • Public Health Agency • Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority • Safeguarding Board for NI 	
Department of the Environment	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside • Historic Buildings Council • Historic Monuments Council • Local Government Staff Commission • NI Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors' Remuneration Panel • NI Biodiversity Group • NI Coastal and Marine Forum
Department of Justice	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Justice Inspection NI • Independent Assessor for Police Service of Northern Ireland Recruitment Vetting • NI Law Commission • NI Police Fund • NI Policing Board • Office of the Police Ombudsman • Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Monitoring Board • Prisoner Ombudsman for NI

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation Board NI • Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation 	
Department for Regional Development	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Harbour Commissioners • Londonderry Port & Harbour Commissioners • NI Transport Holding Company • NI Water • Warrenpoint Harbour Authority 	
Department for Social Development	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charities Advisory Committee • Charity Commission for NI • NI Housing Executive Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaughan's Charity Trust
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	
REGULATED	UNREGULATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner for Children and Young People • Commissioner for Older People • Commission for Victims and Survivors for NI • Ilex Urban Regeneration Company Ltd • Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation • NI Judicial Appointments Commission • Office of the Police Ombudsman for NI • Strategic Investment Board Ltd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney General for NI • Commissioner for Public Appointments NI • Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse • NI Community Relations Council • Planning and Water Appeals Commissions • Victims and Survivors Service

ANNEXE II

CPA NI Operating Plan 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>CPA Code of Practice To prescribe and publish, and update as necessary, a Code of Practice on the interpretation and application by Departments of the principle of selection on merit for public appointments.</p>	<p>The effective maintenance, development and promotion of the Code of Practice and associated guidance.</p>	<p>Monitor the implementation of the Code in recruitment processes.</p> <p>Liaise closely with Department Public Appointment Units and recruitment practitioners including Independent Assessors.</p> <p>Amend Code and produce guidance as necessary.</p>
<p>Audit and Compliance Monitoring To conduct audits to review the policies, practices and actions of Departments in making public appointments.</p> <p>To conduct regular compliance checks on documentation and processes used and issued by Departments, including Advertisements and Press Releases.</p>	<p>A CPA NI programme of audit, and a compliance monitoring regime, designed to ensure that appointment processes are carried out effectively, fairly, openly, efficiently and proportionately and in line with the Commissioner's Code.</p>	<p>Select 6 relevant competitions for audit as the year progresses</p> <p>Carry out audit programme with increased focus on diversity.</p> <p>Report on findings, produce recommendations.</p> <p>Conduct follow-up on implementation by Departments of recommendations.</p> <p>Monitor Advertisements, Press Releases and other documents as necessary.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Complaints To conduct effective inquires into Department policies, practices and actions on any public appointment process.</p>	<p>The establishment, maintenance, publication and implementation of an effective and objective complaints system.</p>	<p>Investigate and report on complaints presented to CPA NI. Follow up necessary action with Departments.</p>
<p>Annual Report To publish an annual report</p>	<p>The provision of a comprehensive annual report which serves the requirements of the internal and external stakeholders of CPA NI, including the political and administrative systems of Government and the general public.</p>	<p>Collate relevant information for the year and publish annual report. Provide FM/dFM with an advance copy of report. Present report to NI Assembly</p>
<p>Advice and Guidance To provide advice and guidance in the conduct of effective and fair public appointment procedures that are compliant with the Code.</p>	<p>The provision of prompt and high quality responses to queries on the Code and its application, from panel chairs, Independent Assessors and other relevant parties.</p>	<p>Provide regular updates, advice, guidance and training to Independent Assessors, Departmental representatives and other relevant parties. Provide an “open door” for queries from all sources. Maintain a system for handling, managing and recording all queries.</p>
<p>Independent Assessors To manage, train, allocate, and monitor a pool of suitably trained individuals that Departments use to meet the policy requirement of independent assessment</p>	<p>The effective management of a trained, competent and experienced team of Independent Assessors who provide an effective and efficient service in all public appointment recruitment</p>	<p>Manage, train, allocate and monitor a team of Assessors. Provide all necessary forms of support and guidance to Independent Assessors.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>in the public appointment process.</p> <p>These Assessors are independent of Government and the Commissioner.</p>	<p>processes.</p>	<p>Implement effective administrative procedures and records with regard to the management of the Assessors.</p>
<p>Budget</p> <p>In co-operation with OFMDFM Corporate Services Division, to establish, implement and monitor the CPA NI budgetary process and financial regime.</p>	<p>Adherence to all financial and budget guidance issued by OFMDFM, and successful management of the budgetary and financial processes set out in the Financial Memorandum and other relevant documents.</p>	<p>Implement effective, efficient and accurate processes of budgetary and financial management.</p> <p>Process payments, in a timely and accountable manner, using Account NI.</p> <p>Ensure that all procurement is compliant with the regulations stipulated by OFMDFM sponsor branch.</p> <p>Ensure that the necessary resources are secured to meet the full requirements of CPA NI and its customers, allowing for levels of complaints, issues arising from audit and compliance work, ad hoc legal advice and research requirements.</p>
<p>Liaison with stakeholders</p> <p>To raise the profile of CPA NI and its functions, within and without the political and administrative systems of Government, in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promote public appointment 	<p>An increased awareness, by all internal and external stakeholders, of public appointment opportunities and of a fair and open merit-based recruitment process.</p>	<p>Maintain strong working links with Ministers, Advisors and MLAs.</p> <p>Maintain strong working links with senior Civil Service and Department contacts.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>opportunities to a wide field of potential candidates;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increase public confidence in the fairness and openness of the public appointments system; – ensure that the public is aware of the independent functions provided by CPA NI and of the right to avail of the CPA NI complaints procedure. 		<p>Continue proactive outreach programme that informs and includes such groups as women, young people, people with a disability, ethnic minorities and people from a wider business, industry and third sector background; by this means help to tackle the problems of under-representation faced by Departments in achieving greater strength through diversity on boards, problems illustrated by the diversity figures in the 'OFMDFM Public Bodies & Public Appointments Annual Report'.</p> <p>Monitor the progress made on recommendations from the Commissioner's January 2014 Diversity Report and continue work on the diversity/under-representation challenge.</p> <p>Develop a pilot training programme with input from Departments on the Public Appointments application process for external stakeholders.</p> <p>Conduct a survey with recent Public Appointment applicants to gain an insight of their experience and opinions of the process. Report findings in an appropriate manner.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Administrative Support To plan and co-ordinate the work of the Commissioner's office to meet the business plan targets in the most effective, efficient and value-for-money manner.</p>	<p>The provision of an efficient and effective service to the Commissioner and all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Regularly monitor progress in line with each business plan key target, measure and action.</p> <p>Fulfil the requirements of the sponsor branch as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding and other relevant documents.</p> <p>Manage the Commissioner's diary.</p> <p>Ensure that all Personal Performance Agreements are up to date and in line with current procedures.</p> <p>Ensure that all staff are provided with appropriate training opportunities to help them fulfil their respective roles and meet their business objectives.</p>
<p>Northern Ireland Executive Asset Management Strategy To provide a commitment to the objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Asset Management Strategy.</p>	<p>A commitment to the objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Asset Management Strategy.</p>	<p>This is to be reviewed annually to determine any action needed.</p>
<p>Information Management To ensure all information managed and stored by CPANI is in line with all relevant policy.</p>	<p>Manage information in accordance with all relevant legislation requirements and Departmental policies.</p>	<p>Monitor information assurance procedures.</p> <p>Continue to implement data</p>



KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
		sharing arrangements with all Departments.

ANNEXE III

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE

Whilst being independent of the Government and the Civil Service in the exercise of its statutory functions, CPA NI is part of the OFMDFM financial and resource management arrangements. The Commissioner, as a statutory post holder described as 'Senior Accountable Officer', has a duty to ensure that all resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively. All expenditure and procurement by CPA NI is routinely monitored and is in line with OFMDFM guidance and requirements.

CPA NI Costs 2014/2015

Rent	£12,090.00
Maintenance	£5878.17
Maintenance administration fees	£931.76
Cleaning	£1975.56
Electricity	£1634.27
Gas	£2993.96
Other Premises Costs	£181.11
Carbon Reduction Commitment	£81.89
Computers/IT/Phones	£1080.00
Contingencies	£1863.40
Independent Assessors	£6146.35
Independent Assessor Training	£1175.00
Annual Report	£431.70
Procurement of Legal Services	£824.30
Travel and Subsistence	£337.76
Subscriptions	£300.00
TOTAL	£37,925.23



The Statement of Expenditure above does not include remuneration which is as follows:

The Commissioner is contracted to commit circa 90 days per year to his post and receives remuneration of £28,652. The seconded officers who make up the Commissioner's staff are remunerated at their respective Civil Service rates.

ANNEXE IV

The 26 recommendations of the Commissioner's January 2014 report 'Under-Representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland.'

Recommendations for action

The Diversity Working Group, which finished its series of meetings in January 2014, produced a range of ideas that Government overall, and the individual Departments, should consider for increasing diversity in public appointments. Also, some of the groups and organisations that were consulted made suggestions for change, and a few of the recommendations are based on the reviewed literature.

The recommendations are listed below for consideration. There is no claim that they are exclusive and it is expected that, as the work is developed, other ideas for action will emerge. The recommendations range in nature from high-level, policy/strategic to detailed process recommendations. It is the strong belief of CPA NI that the effectiveness of the recommended actions will be greatly enhanced if they are set in the context of an overall government plan for diversity, publicly articulated. The Canadian 'Diversity Matters' initiative is strong on this point; it says 'Our plan recognises that the responsibility for achieving diversity is a shared one between Governments and their [public bodies]'

It is essential that, when making changes to public appointment processes, Departments must at all times continue to observe the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland and the Anti-Discrimination Laws. The Code can be found on the CPA NI website.

www.publicappointmentsni.org

It contains information on how to source the Anti-Discrimination laws. CPA NI is available at all times to assist with matters relating to the Code.

The recommendations, below, are loosely grouped in categories such as 'Strategic recommendations' and 'Awareness-raising':



Strategic recommendations

1. Make board diversity public policy and set measurable goals: - Specific public policy should be developed on board diversity, together with an overall framework for action by the Executive and Departments, and this should be articulated to the public, monitored and reported on annually.
2. It should be made clear to Departments and the public that the intention is to change the culture of the public appointment process with the aim of improving diversity and eradicating under-representation on public boards. Also, the culture and practices of individual boards should be examined to ensure that they are conducive to women and other under-represented groupings serving on them.
3. The recently created inter-departmental 'Public Appointments Forum' [the Forum] provides capacity for issues of under-representation and lack of diversity to be addressed across the N.I. Civil Service rather than on a departmental basis. The Forum should be tasked with ensuring that the new policy and framework at [1] above is articulated and disseminated across all Departments and it should be sufficiently resourced to carry out its work. It is also recommended that 'Diversity' should feature as a standing item on the agendas of the Forum.
4. It is considered that the Forum might benefit from the inclusion of a challenge function, provided by an external member or members. This should be examined.
5. It is believed that the establishment of diversity targets, set at overall and departmental levels, will lend focus and rigour to the diversity initiative. Work should begin on establishing such targets.
6. Departments should conduct a statistical analysis of applications after each recruitment competition, to discern progress towards greater diversity. The departmental analysis should then be pooled for an overall picture. These analyses should inform the on-going development of policy and practice.

Awareness-raising recommendations

7. Mechanisms for raising awareness of public appointments are fragmented. Consideration should be given to a more centralised approach, perhaps using the NI Direct website. Vacancies should also be publicised through the public libraries network, which has proved successful in recent competitions. The nature of public appointment advertisements should be



reviewed as they are seen by many to be unattractive to people outside the 'usual circle' of applicants. The imaginative use of technology should be more fully explored in the task of raising awareness.

8. The use of case studies should be developed, portraying successes by individuals from under-represented groups who have gained places on public boards.
9. All information on public appointments, e.g. 'Make your Mark: A Guide to Public Appointments in Northern Ireland', should be revised, in conjunction with CPA NI, to reflect the new policy and framework at [1] above, and should portray a proactive and focussed approach by Government to addressing under-representation and lack of diversity, whilst honouring and protecting the principle of selection on merit.
10. A pilot project to raise awareness amongst potential applicants/interested parties is currently being considered by CPA NI and a Department. The results of this pilot should be disseminated across the Departments.

Recruitment-process recommendations

11. Departments should include, in the 'Appointment Plan' which they produce for every public appointment competition, a section on diversity which sets out, for the Minister's approval, what steps [in outreach and process] will be taken to achieve the best possible spread of applicants and, ultimately, appointees. CPA NI will include this requirement in the Commissioner's Code of Practice.
12. The public appointment process has a tendency to be 'generic' in nature, i.e. focussed on making a 'public appointment' as opposed to appointing an individual to the board of a specific organisation, with its specific requirements of board members. Many examples have been cited, by panel members, of experienced candidates using 'stock answers' which they have developed to answer the commonly used questions in most public appointment competitions. Departments should focus the recruitment process more on the requirements of the particular organisation and its board.
13. Departments should examine the opportunity to reduce the number of statutory nominations to the boards of their arms-length bodies, opening up positions for a wider range of applicants.
14. Departments could consider interviewing a larger number of applicants where is appropriate to do so.

- 
15. Departments, in populating boards, should be ‘building teams’ rather than ‘filling slots’. This will lead to such measures as:
- conducting an audit of board skills and planning to recruit against identified needs, including the types of community-based skills and perspectives that are not well reflected in the standard set of competencies typically used in current public appointment processes.
 - if necessary creating different categories of board member, with specific application form questions and interview questions.
 - looking critically at job descriptions and person specifications to reflect this approach and widen the range of potential applicants.
 - looking critically at the criteria and not sticking to the ‘tried and tested’ criteria used frequently across public appointments.
 - changing the written / verbal balance of the process where appropriate, e.g. it might be better, on the ‘communication’ criterion, to require the candidate to demonstrate his/her abilities throughout the interview or by means of a presentation rather than providing a written ‘stock answer’ on the application form.
 - avoiding the clichéd questions; developing questions that draw out a proper demonstration of competency.
 - reducing the number of selection criteria where appropriate, or asking applicants to fulfil some, not all, of the criteria, on the basis that the board does not need one homogeneous group of board members who replicate each other’s skills and abilities.
 - reviewing the use of ‘knowledge’ criteria, in which there are many examples of candidates ‘cutting and pasting’ website answers; instead make these criteria such that candidates have to give short presentations at interview.

Analysis recommendations

16. ‘Multiple appointments’ [when one individual is appointed to two or more boards] have been cited by consultees as reducing opportunities for others to secure public appointments. The statistics on multiple appointments should be examined and policy developed that will guide Departments and their appointment panels on how to handle the issue. Some restriction on multiple appointments would be seen, by many, as evidence of the culture change that is sought in public appointments.

- 
17. Succession planning for board membership has been patchy in many Departments and arms-length bodies and should be improved. Recent CPA NI audits have highlighted this requirement. This work by Departments should include consideration of diversity and how succession planning can incorporate diversity planning.
 18. Remuneration of board members does not exhibit consistency, with some board members being unremunerated. This is believed by many to be a disincentive to potential applicants. An audit should be conducted across the Departments to determine the full facts, and guidelines produced to assist Departments in dealing consistently and fairly with the matter.

Outreach recommendations

19. Departments should specifically encourage applications from 'non-traditional backgrounds'; they should include this in the application form and should target interest groups and sectoral groups.
20. Departments should consider use of the 'Guaranteed Interview' scheme which has had some success in bringing forward for interview candidates with a disability who demonstrate in the application form that they have the basic competencies for the board position. Also, with regard to applicants in receipt of various disability benefits, guidelines should be developed to address the problem of potential applicants being dissuaded from applying for remunerated posts because of the potential disruption to their benefits.
21. Departments should consider using a variation of the welcoming statement commonly included in advertisements for public appointments, to ensure that it is clear they are seeking the widest range of applicants, including applicants from the private and third sectors.
22. The content, language and style of candidate information packs should be reviewed, with input by CPA NI, in line with the new policy and framework at [1] above.
23. More support should be provided for individuals who are considering applying for public appointments. Short seminars and / or papers could be prepared to help potential applicants understand what public appointments are, how they get to know what opportunities are being advertised, how to understand the competency-based selection process and what panels are looking for, how to deal with the application and



interview process and how to portray their skills and abilities as added value to the board.

24. Very few younger people have been able to secure Board positions; senior officials and recruitment panels have often expressed reluctance to take the risk they see attached to placing relatively inexperienced people on boards, even when the skills and perspectives of a younger person might add value to the board of a particular organisation. A range of possibilities exist, for introducing younger people to 'board life', including 'Shadow boards', mentoring relationships for young board members, and internships. Departments should consider developing such schemes, perhaps initially on a pilot basis.

CPA NI action recommendations

25. The audits of CPA NI, which include examination of departmental efforts on diversity in each competition, should include examination of how the competition arrangements fulfil the requirements of the new policy and framework.
 26. CPA NI should ensure that Independent Assessors are trained and enabled to challenge pre-conceived ideas as to what is required of potential appointees and encourage recognition, at appointment panel level, of the benefits of diversity.
-