

Section 5

Staffing

Introduction

The Commission continued to fill all external Assembly posts through public advertisement. It has developed comprehensive recruitment procedures that are based on the merit principle and are delivered through competence-based assessment.

The current staffing complement is 370 and a number of key posts remain to be filled following the restoration of the Assembly in the post-election period. The Commission has determined that a key priority is the creation of employment arrangements that fully address the needs of the Assembly. As part of that priority, the Commission is in the process of creating a new pay and grading system for staff in the Secretariat. This process will establish grades around similarly weighted jobs in the Assembly, rather than using the Northern Ireland Civil Service grades, which cannot fully reflect the grading structure required.

Terms and Conditions of Service/Pay and Grading

The Commission has appointed a human resource consultant, on a fixed contract basis, to progress the findings of a terms and conditions/ pay and grading review and produce a set of proposals for consideration by the Commission.

A key feature of this process has been the involvement of a team of job evaluation specialists, who have examined a range of posts across the Assembly to ensure a pay and grading structure that meets the unique needs of the Assembly.



Staff from Office of the Keeper

Recruitment Programme

In the past year 19 separate recruitment competitions have been organised, covering a wide range of posts including the Clerk to the Commission, Head of Internal Review, Senior Procurement Officer, Deputy Editor of Debates, Education Officer, Assembly Clerk, Assistant Clerk/Office Manager and Research Officer.

There have been 1,186 applications, with 71 appointments being made. Analysis shows that of the 71 people appointed by the Commission, 38% are drawn from the Northern Ireland Civil Service, with 62% coming from a range of employment backgrounds, including the community, voluntary and private sectors.



New Secretariat staff attending an Assembly Induction Programme

Further analysis indicates that 27 appointments are from the Catholic community, 42 from the Protestant community and two appointments are classed as 'not determined'. The gender breakdown of people appointed to the Assembly is 31 male, 40 female.

The Commission's Responsibility as an Employer

The Commission has determined that there will not be a single union agreement in the Assembly, and it is willing to meet any trade union that represents staff employed by the Assembly. A local trade union Whitley committee has now been established, and a

Whitley constitution has been agreed that provides the basis for future consultation between management and staff.

The Commission agreed an equal opportunities policy in October 2002. The policy sets out how equality of opportunity will be promoted through affirmative action, monitoring and appropriate review procedures.

During the period a comprehensive training needs analysis was undertaken. This has led to the development of a Secretariat-wide training and development strategy.

Work During Suspension

During suspension the functions of the Commission passed to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and it was agreed that the Secretariat staffing complement should be retained so that the full range of Assembly services could be provided on restoration.

The period of suspension provided an opportunity to engage staff in the development and delivery of a number of key projects that would lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness across all directorates. In addition, a number of staff were redeployed to other legislatures and engaged in supporting the work of the various Government Departments.