



An Coimisiún um Cheapacháin Seirbhíse Poiblí  
Commission for Public Service Appointments

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017



2018 Commission for Public Service Appointments  
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Contents

Introduction .....5

The Commission .....6

Codes of practice .....8

Recruitment licences..... 10

Complaints..... 11

Audits ..... 19

Approved agencies..... 25

Excluded positions..... 26

Appendixes..... 27

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# Introduction

2017 marked the Commission's 13th full year in operation as the regulator of recruitment and selection in the public service. Since its inception, the Commission has played a central role in instilling values of fairness and transparency. It has facilitated offices and departments to recruit high quality employees and in doing so has helped promote confidence in the services they provide to the public.

During this time, the Commission has overseen the fair appointment of staff to a changing public service. In response to a lifted moratorium and a requirement to resource an expanding public service, the number of appointments being made has increased. Now more than ever, the importance of appointing appropriate staff, with the skills and abilities to support a modern and progressive public service, is to the fore.

In response to this, a set of revised codes of practices were introduced in early March. This was with the aim of providing public bodies and candidates with a clearer understanding of what should be expected in an appointment process as well as providing a more meaningful, transparent and supportive experience to candidates at each stage.

The Commission received 52 complaints in 2017, an increase of 10% on those received in 2016 and 26% on those in 2015. However, within the context of overall staffing levels within the public service and an increase in the number of selection processes being undertaken, the number of complaints received was notably low. The Commission considers that this reflects a strong awareness among public bodies of their responsibilities under the codes of practice as well as a commitment to maintaining high standards in the selection of candidates.

## The Commission

Our mission is to safeguard the integrity of the recruitment, selection and appointment of people to publicly funded positions and, by continually improving standards, to engender widespread confidence in the ability of those appointed to contribute to the delivery of public services.

The Commission has five members and is chaired by the Ceann Comhairle, chairperson of Dáil Éireann. In 2017 its members were:

- Mr Seán Ó'Fearghail T.D., An Ceann Comhairle
- Mr Martin Fraser, Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach and Secretary General to the Government
- Mr Peter Tyndall, Ombudsman and Information Commissioner
- Mr Justice Daniel O'Keeffe, Chairperson of the Standards in Public Office Commission
- Mr Robert Watt, Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

The Commission is supported in its operations by staff of the secretariat of the Commission for Public Service Appointments. The secretariat is led by Ms Jacqui McCrum, Director and Mr Liam Duffy, Secretary to the Commission. It also supported by Ms Maire Ni Fhiachain, Assistant Principal and a team of committed and dedicated staff members who make the day-to-day work of the Commission possible.

The Commission would like to express its appreciation to all staff members of the secretariat for their continued dedication and hard work throughout 2017. It would also like to thank the staff of the shared services units in the Office of the Ombudsman for their ongoing support.

## Our role

The Commission is Ireland's regulator for recruitment and selection within the Irish public service. It was established in 2004, under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act, 2004 (the Act) and is responsible for ensuring that all appointments to publicly funded positions are done so fairly, transparently and on the basis of merit.

Appointments that fall within the remit of the Commission include those to:

- Positions in the Civil Service
- Certain positions in An Garda Síochána
- Positions to which the Local Authorities Act 1926 applies
- Positions in the HSE
- Positions in certain public service bodies

The Commission plays a key role in setting and promoting the principles of good practice that should be followed in any selection process. It does this through the publication of codes of practice. These codes outline the standards which should be met at each stage of a process. In addition to this, the Commission has an oversight role, monitoring recruitment and selection activity carried out under the codes and highlighting areas for improvement.

While the day-to-day activities carried out by the Commission are diverse, its key responsibilities include:

- Issuing recruitment licences to public bodies
- Setting and promoting principles of good recruitment practice
- Publishing codes of practice outlining the standards that should be followed
- Providing for review and appeal mechanisms where a candidate is unhappy
- Ensuring ongoing compliance
- Carrying out recruitment audits of licence holders
- Examining complaints in relation to allegations of breaches of the codes of practice

## Codes of practice

One of the Commission's primary functions is to set out the principles and standards that should be followed by a public body when carrying out a recruitment process. These are set out in its codes of practice. The Commission's key recruitment and selection principles are:

1. Probity
2. Merit
3. Best practice
4. Consistency
5. Transparency

The codes provide guidance on the meaning and application of these principles in everyday practice. They also set out the standards which should be followed at each stage of a selection process.

The Commission has five distinct codes of practice. These are the:

- Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service
- Code of Practice for Emergency Short-term Appointments to Positions in the Health Service Executive
- Code of Practice for Appointment of Persons with Disabilities to Positions in the Civil Service and Certain Public Bodies
- Code of Practice for Atypical Appointments to Positions in the Civil Service and Certain Public Bodies
- Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions where the Garda Commissioner has Statutory Responsibilities

The majority of appointments are made under the Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service. However, in certain circumstances, appointments will be made under one of the other specified codes.



## New codes of practice

As part of an ongoing commitment to quality assurance, a review was carried out in late 2016 into the codes of practice. The Commission engaged with a number of public bodies and sought feedback from candidates, with a view to updating, where relevant, the provisions of the codes.

In March 2017 a revised set of codes came into operation. Clearer and more concise definitions of the standards at each stage of the recruitment process were among the features of the new codes. This was aimed at providing both public bodies and candidates with a clearer understanding of what should be expected in a fair, merit-based appointment process.

The new codes also streamlined, to a certain degree, the review and complaint mechanisms open to candidates. They included a strengthened focus on the informal review process as well as the level of feedback required. This was with a view to providing a more meaningful, transparent and supportive process to candidates at each stage.

To accompany their release, the Commission engaged in significant outreach. This was to ensure public bodies and any staff in their HR units were aware of the changes and had a clear understanding of the codes.

## Atypical appointments

The Commission understands that it can be necessary, from time-to-time, for public bodies to assign staff members to higher duties, on a temporary basis, in order to meet critical short-term needs. In such cases, short-term acting up appointments can be made under the Commission's Atypical Code of Practice.

An examination was carried out of acting up appointments made in a sample of public bodies within the remit of the Commission in 2017. It was noted that, across 37 different bodies, 515 acting up appointments were made. Of these, 110 appointments were made under the Atypical Code. However, 73 of those appointments were for a duration longer than six months.

Where an acting up appointment is made under the Atypical Code, the Commission generally expects that the appointment will be of a duration of less than six months. Where an appointment is longer than this, the Commission considers that the public body should have had sufficient time to undertake an open, merit-based selection process.

The findings suggest that HR staff in a number public bodies may be unclear as to the circumstances in which the different codes should apply. This is further supported by evidence seen during the course of examination of a complaint, where a public body had unknowingly and incorrectly carried out a selection process under the incorrect code.

The Commission would highlight this as an area where clearer guidance and support should be provided to those involved in the application of the various codes within public bodies and their HR units.

## Recruitment licences

In many cases public bodies will recruit employees through the Public Appointments Service (PAS), the centralised provider of public service recruitment. However, in some cases, a public body may wish to carry out its own recruitment.

Any open recruitment activity carried out by a public body, within the remit of the Commission, must be done under licence. Where a body wishes to carry out its own recruitment it can apply to the Commission for a recruitment licence. Licences are granted either generally, in relation to all positions within the public body, or specifically, in relation to particular positions.

Licences are issued with a number of terms and conditions attached that must be strictly adhered to at all times. While the Commission has the power to terminate a licence in certain circumstances, this power has not been invoked to date.

### Licences issued

The Commission granted three new general recruitment licences in 2017. These were to the:

- Office of the Ombudsman for Children
- Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General
- National Shared Service Office

The Commission also engaged in information and training sessions with the new licence holders and staff members within their HR units. This gave them an overview of their obligations as a licence holder as well as providing guidance on the codes of practice and their application.

To date, 34 general licences have been issued to public bodies within the Commission's remit. A full list of the licences issued is attached at Appendix 1

# Complaints

The Commission's codes of practice sets out the review and complaint mechanisms that are open to a candidate if they are unhappy with a selection process. Candidates can either request a review of the decision made or make a complaint about the selection process.

If a candidate wants to request a review of the decision, they can do this directly to the public body. If a candidate believes that the selection process was not carried out fairly, they can make a complaint to the public body in the first instance and to the Commission on appeal.

The examination of complaints makes up a substantial amount of the day-to-day activity of the Commission. An in-depth examination is carried out into the process followed by public body, in order to identify whether any breaches in the codes of practice have occurred.

Where breaches are identified, these are highlighted and recommendations are made to the public body to amend its processes and make sure the issues do not re-occur.

## Complaints received

The Commission received 52 valid complaints in 2017. The breakdown of complaints per public body is outlined below:

Licence Holder	Complaints
Public Appointments Service	26
Health Service Executive	14
An Garda Síochána	6
Irish Prisons Service	3
National Shared Services Office	1
Office of the Revenue Commissioners	1
Social Protection	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

The number of complaints received was an increase of 10% on the number received in 2016 and 26% on that received in 2015. However, the Commission is satisfied that the number of complaints received is relatively small in comparison to the overall number of candidates and the number of appointments made.

## Examination of complaints

In 2017 the Commission completed examination of 46 complaints. On examination, the Commission was broadly satisfied that there is a genuine commitment among public bodies to achieving and maintaining high standards in the selection and appointment of candidates. It also considers that there is a strong awareness among most public bodies of their responsibilities and obligations under the codes of practice.

Of the complaints examined, in 44 cases no breaches of the codes of practice were found to have occurred. In two cases, breaches were found.

### **Breach no. 1**

In the first case, a breach of confidentiality was found to have occurred, where following interview, one of the interview board members contacted a candidate's line manager to discuss his performance at interview.

The Commission considered that, however well intentioned, by failing to appreciate the importance of protecting the candidate's entitlement to confidentiality, the board member had not met standard expected, as person in a decision making role.

It recommended that the public body review the training and guidance it provides to interview board members. It also asked that all board members sign a declaration in advance, confirming that they understand and will honour the need for confidentiality. The Commission also asked that the body provide a report outlining the steps it plans to take to make sure that similar breach will not happen again.

### **Breach no. 2**

In the second case, while the Commission did not uphold the primary allegations made, it did note, with some concern, that the review into the candidate's complaint was carried out by a person that the candidate was in ongoing correspondence with throughout the selection process.

The Commission noted the importance of independence and impartiality in review mechanisms. It also highlighted that failure in this case to allow the candidate an independent review constituted a breach in the code of practice. The public body was advised to amend its processes to make sure that, in future, formal reviews are carried out by a person not associated with the selection process.

## Recommendations

Notwithstanding the relatively small number of breaches identified, in 12 other cases the Commission found that, while the actions taken did not constitute a breach of the codes, certain aspects of the selection process fell below the standard that the Commission would expect to see. In these cases, recommendations were made to the public body to amend its processes.

These recommendations included ensuring that:

- Clear information is given candidates on the review and appeal mechanisms open to them
- All selection processes are carried out under the appropriate code of practice and all staff involved in selection are fully trained on where each code should apply
- Appropriate planning and selection activities are carried out in advance of a process, to determine the vacancies likely to arise and resources required
- The timeframes for dealing with review and appeal mechanisms set out in the codes are followed
- Clearly defined eligibility criteria are applied, that are accompanied by documented procedures setting out how candidates will be assessed
- Any information provided to candidates in advance of a process is clear, accurate and representative of the process
- Actions are taken to minimise the risk of disclosing confidential information to third parties when seeking references from previous employers
- Reference checks are carried out only after a public body is satisfied, in so far as possible, that a candidate has met the eligibility requirements

## Case studies

The complaints received in 2017 cross a spectrum of different aspects and stages of the selection process. The Commission is conscious of similar themes which may arise where decisions made by the Commission can serve as a learning tool for all public bodies in the future. A summary of a number of these complaints is included below.

### Video interview

#### Complaint

The Complainant applied for a position in the civil service in 2017 through PAS. They were considered not to have met the qualifying standard at stage 1 of the process, a video-interview. The complainant was concerned that the use of video-interviewing, as an untested shortlisting mechanism, was in breach of the code of practice.

The complainant made a complaint to the Commission raising concerns as to whether acceptable standards of probity existed in video-interviewing and whether the process was in line with best practice. They noted concerns as to:

- The extent to which the mechanism has been assessed as an appropriate and effective assessment method
- The limited transparency with regard to the process
- Whether the criteria for judging suitability appropriately related to the qualifications, personal attributes and skills required for the role
- The dangers of assessments being made in isolation from other candidate information
- The potential unreliability of the assessment mechanism, which could render any feedback provided meaningless

## **Findings**

In January 2017 PAS initiated a tendering process for a pilot study in the use of video-interviewing, as part of its recruitment and selection activities. The decision to pilot video-interviewing was made having regard to the fact that it is a well-established technique for candidate assessment and with a view to establishing its benefits for use across the public service.

Substantial consideration was given in advance of the process to the implications of its introduction. Research was carried out into the potential benefits and to best practice in the area. Information was sought from prospective providers on the best approach to fit PAS' needs. It also sought information on what safeguards would be incorporated into the process and how it would ensure compliance with the codes of practice.

Before the pilot was rolled out, a risk impact assessment was carried out highlighting any potential risks involved and what actions were required to mitigate these. Consultations were also held with related bodies internationally, to assess previous experiences in carrying out video-based assessment.

## **Commission's decision**

The Commission considered that, whilst video interviewing had not been used previously by PAS, it is a well-established and recognised tool for candidate assessment. It acknowledged that PAS employed a reputable provider, with substantial experience in the field of video-interviewing for public sector bodies both in Ireland and internationally. It was also satisfied that considerable research, consultation and consideration was given to the development and application of this as a testing mechanism, in advance of the process.

The personnel employed to carry out the assessment were appropriately trained and briefed in advance of the process. Appropriate safeguards were included throughout the process to ensure consistency in approach and appropriate application of the system.

The Commission was satisfied that the assessment method presented a fair and equal opportunity for candidates to present their skills and experience transparently and consistently, in order to make informed decision on the progression of candidates to the next stage. On this basis, it found that no breach in the code of practice had occurred.

## Misleading information

### Complaint

The complainant applied for an internal promotion competition in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. They were deemed unsuccessful at interview as they did not meet the standard required in the competency of 'specialist knowledge, expertise and self-development'.

The Complainant believed that this decision breached the Code of Practice as the assessment of this competency was not included in the information provided to candidates in advance.

The Complainant also alleged that there was an omission of scoring for the competency of 'drive and commitment' did not take place at interview. Candidates were led to believe that this would be assessed globally, throughout the interview.

### Findings

In advance of the competition, a circular was issued advertising the position on the Office of the Revenue Commissioner's Intranet portal. Attached to the circular, was a list of the six key competencies required to carry out the role. Candidates were told that they would be assessed under these six competencies at interview.

- Team leadership
- Analysis & decision making
- Management & delivery of results
- Interpersonal & communication skills
- Drive and commitment
- Specialist knowledge, expertise and self-development

On invitation to interview, the complainant was provided with an additional circular, outlining that the interview would consist of a competitive interview focusing on the following four competencies:

- Team leadership
- Interpersonal and communication skills
- Analysis and decision making
- Management and delivery of results



The circular made no reference to the competencies of 'drive and commitment' and 'specialist knowledge, expertise and self-development'.

Candidates were asked, at this stage, to complete a key achievements document providing specific examples under each of the six competency areas originally outlined. The document also advised that the competency of 'drive and commitment' would be assessed globally throughout the interview.

In advance of interview, an interviewer's guidance booklet was issued to all board members. This outlined five areas of questioning at interview, including 'specialist knowledge, expertise and self-development'. No reference was made to assessment of the competency of 'drive and commitment'. In addition, scoring indicators were provided only in relation to four competency areas, those outlined in the second circular.

At interview, all candidates were questioned and scored under five competency areas. This included 'specialist knowledge, expertise and self-development'. No candidates were scored under the competency of 'drive and commitment'.

### **Commission's decision**

The Commission considered that a number of clear discrepancies occurred in the information provided to both candidates and board members throughout the process. It was satisfied that all candidates were assessed consistently and only against criteria directly related to the duties and requirements of the role. However, the information provided to candidates was potentially misleading and may have had an effect on candidates' preparation for and performance at interview.

The Commission recommended that in future, information provided to all parties is accurate, unambiguous and representative of the assessment process.

## Assessment of experience

### Complaint

The complainant applied for a senior position in local authorities through PAS. They were dissatisfied with the assessment mechanisms used at shortlisting and preliminary interview stages.

The complainant alleged that the preliminary interview stage was unfair as it focused on just three out of the six competency areas required for the role. It also failed to take into account the extent of a candidate's experience and technical ability.

The complainant also alleged that the decision to progress the top 30 percent of candidates from each of the preliminary interview boards, instead of the top 30 percent overall, was unfair and did not represent merit-based selection.

### Findings

The Commission noted that, in advance of preliminary interview, candidates were assessed against a number of clearly set eligibility criteria that were directly related to the duties and requirements of the role. Candidates who met the standard at this stage were then included in a shortlisting stage. At shortlisting, all aspects of candidate application forms were evaluated against a number of agreed criteria, again directly related to the skills and abilities required for the role.

Following this, at preliminary interview, candidates were assessed under three of the key competencies defined for role. The Commission found that the preliminary interview provided an adequate platform for evaluating candidates' skills and abilities, as well as the extent to which they have attained these skills in the course of their career to date.

### Commission's decision

The Commission recognises that, where there is a large pool of candidates, it is neither practical nor cost effective to try to apply the full suite of competencies or selection tools to each candidate at each stage. While the entire range of competencies were not applied in this case, the Commission was satisfied that the job and person specifications for the role were substantively and appropriately applied at the different stages of the process.

The Commission also noted that, when faced with evaluating a large number of candidates, it is extremely difficult to ensure that different selection boards achieve a perfect level of consistency in how they mark candidates. On this basis, the Commission considered that the option chosen by the PAS, to progress the top 30% of candidates from each board, was the correct one in this case.

The Commission found that no breach in the code of practice had occurred.

## Audits

As part of the Commission's oversight role, a number of audits are undertaken annually into recruitment and selection activities in public bodies within its remit. The audit process has succeeded in establishing a continuing programme for raising standards within public service selection processes. It also serves as an essential learning tool for public bodies, setting benchmarks for good practice and highlighting areas for improvement.

In 2017 two audits were carried out into specific processes within PAS and the HSE, those for appointment to consultant positions in the HSE and senior positions within the health business service unit of the HSE. A third follow-up audit was also carried out into processes within An Garda Síochána for appointment to positions at sergeant and inspector grade.

On the whole, the audits showed an appropriate level of compliance with the key recruitment principles. The Commission also noted a genuine commitment among public bodies to achieving and maintaining high standards in recruitment and selection. However, a number of areas were highlighted where improvements could be made.

An overview of the audits carried out in 2017 is provided below.

### Consultant positions in the HSE

In March 2017 an audit was carried out into the processes used by PAS in recruiting candidates to consultant positions in the HSE. On the whole, the Commission was satisfied that appropriate safeguards were in place to support fair, merit-based appointment. However, a number of areas were identified for consideration in future selection processes. These are outlined below.

### Timescales

A number of selection board members noted that the HSE can often be slow to initiate an appointment process and in some cases will wait until the incumbent is about to retire. They noted that considerable leeway is also afforded to successful candidates in taking up a position, sometimes leaving key positions vacant for long periods.

The Commission recommended that the PAS impresses upon the HSE the importance of proper succession planning measures, highlighting the dangers of delays in filling a position and the pressure this places on selection boards to make an assignment. It also advised that the HSE should explore how it might introduce greater controls to make sure successful candidates take up duty without delay.

## Risks of making an unsuitable appointment

Consultant positions have a broad range of responsibilities which can include clinical, strategic, leadership, managerial and interpersonal skills. Some selection board members reported that pressure to fill positions without delay can sometimes lead to pragmatic calls on the suitability of candidates.

They also noted that in some cases a candidate might be recommended for appointment despite some slight misgivings about his or her capacity to carry out all of the duties of the role. This is more likely to occur in positions outside of the main clinical centres, where vacancies attract smaller numbers of candidates.

The Commission was broadly satisfied with the post-interview clearance procedures. However, it considered that the assessment of candidates' strategic, leadership and managerial skills could have been explored in greater depth.

On this basis, the Commission recommended that PAS explore how it might incorporate additional assessment steps into the process, to provide a greater level of assurance on the suitability of candidates. It also recommended that PAS set out clearly to board members that, where any doubts arise, it is better that no appointment is made.

## Linking selection criteria to the job and person specification

The Commission noted that the selection criteria used at shortlisting and interview stages for the most part reflected key elements of the job and person specification. However, in some cases it was not made clear to candidates how the assessment criteria directly related to the job and person specification or how the interview would be structured.

The Commission recommended that PAS review how information on the selection criteria and format of the interview is outlined to candidates, in advance of the process. This would allow candidates better prepare for interview and support merit-based appointment.

## Training of selection board members

It was noted that the chairpersons chosen for selection boards were generally of a very high standard. However, some of the clinical/professional selection board members spoken to advised that they had never received formal interview training.

The Commission recommended that PAS check with all board members in advance of a process whether they have received formal interview training. Where this is not the case, or significant time has elapsed since the training took place, training should be provided.

## Management of connections

The Commission noted with some concern that some selection board members had met with, spoken to and formed opinions on candidates in advance of interview. The Commission recommended that PAS advise all board members that they must not discuss the vacancy with any potential candidates in advance, as this could compromise the impartiality of the process.

## Senior positions in the HSE

In April 2017, the HSE wrote to the Commission inviting it to examine appointment processes carried out for two senior positions in its Health Business Services (HBS) unit, general manager and national pension's improvement and grade VIII HR manager.

The conduct of these processes had been included in a protected disclosure made by a senior member of staff within HBS. The disclosure included allegations of impropriety in both processes. A number of issues were raised relating to the job and person specification for the role. In particular these related to:

- i. The approval process prior to advertisement
- ii. The eligibility criteria
- iii. The length of contract
- iv. The description of the location of the post

Following its investigation, the Commission was broadly satisfied that the HSE had appropriate measures in place to support the objective, transparent and merit-based appointment of candidates. However, it considered that there were a number of areas where the HSE could amend its procedures to safeguard similar processes in the future. These are outlined below.

## Advertisement

The Commission noted with some concern the relatively small number of applications received for both positions. The HSE advised that it was not unusual for posts of this nature, situated regionally, to attract limited candidate pools.

The Commission advised that the HSE should explore how LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media platforms could be used to build interest in recruitment to positions and widen candidate pools. This would allow the HSE to engage more actively with potential candidates, in particular for positions that have proven difficult to fill in the past.

It also recommended that, at the planning stage of a process, the HSE should take account of the impact of offering only short-term assignments on the size and quality of candidate pools. This is particularly relevant when a post is located a reasonable distance from any large population centre.

## Eligibility criteria

The codes of practice set out that any eligibility criteria included in a process should not be overly restrictive and should directly reflect the duties and responsibilities of the role.

The Commission noted in this case that the requirement for previous experience within a civil or public service organisation was unnecessarily restrictive and could have deterred potentially suitable candidates from applying. It recommended that in future any eligibility criteria included are not restrictive and reflect only the duties and requirements of the role.

## Management of connections

It is not uncommon that board members will have, or previously will have had, a connection to a candidate. It is important that that selection processes therefore have appropriate safeguards in place to minimise any related risks.

It was noted that the candidate information booklet issued for both posts included a member of the interview board as the contact person for enquires and information relating to the post.

On this basis, the Commission recommended that any designated contact person for enquiries relating to a process should not be a member of the selection board.

## Follow-up audit of sergeant and inspector positions in An Garda Síochána

In December 2015 the Commission carried out an audit of selection processes for appointment to sergeant and inspector positions in An Garda Síochána. The audit found that there were a number of areas where procedures were not in line with the codes of practice. In particular it found that:

- The regulations governing promotion competitions were unduly restrictive
- A disproportionate amount of time and resources were being used in carrying out promotion processes
- There was a low level of trust in appointment processes

## 2015 recommendations

On foot of the findings a number of recommendations were made, aimed at making processes more efficient and effective. These included:

- A revision of An Garda Síochána promotion regulations
- Ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to eliminate any risk of canvassing
- Ensuring proper management of connections between board members and candidates
- Introducing an updated panel of board members
- Considering how candidates could apply for posts on a regional/divisional basis
- Considering the relevance of professional examinations in assessing eligibility
- Eliminating line manager ratings and simplifying manager assessments
- Benchmarking methodologies used in other police forces
- A review of role competencies to make sure they directly relate to the duties and responsibilities of the role
- Replacing preliminary interviews with bespoke screening tests

## 2017 follow-up audit

In May 2017, a follow-up audit was carried out to assess what progress had been made on implementing the Commission's recommendations. The Commission was happy to note that significant progress had been made on a number of the recommendations.

It was noted that the An Garda Síochána promotion regulations had been updated and revised and the role of professional examinations as eligibility criterion was under review. Notices in relation to canvassing and its associated disqualification and penalties had also been introduced.

An Garda Síochána had put in place an updated panel of board members, all of which had been trained in procedures for managing connections with candidates. Regional and divisional preferences were also being catered for, with larger numbers of candidates being brought to final stage of the process and longer panels formed.

In addition to this, An Garda Síochána advised that it had employed the services of CEB Talent Assessment to redesign its sergeant and inspector grade selection processes. The scope of the review included an assessment of current roles/competency frameworks, a review of governing

legislation and an examination of existing processes. This was with a view to streamlining processes and ensuring full compliance with the codes of practice. At the end of 2017, this review was still ongoing.

## Audits as a learning tool

The above, and all other audit reports, are published on the Commission's website, [www.cpsa.ie](http://www.cpsa.ie). The audit reports serve as essential learning tools for public bodies, setting benchmarks for good practice and highlighting areas for ongoing improvement.

In addition to this, the Commission would encourage, where possible, the establishment of periodic internal recruitment and selection audits, as part of risk management procedures, in all public bodies within its remit.



# Approved agencies

In most cases a licence holder will carry out all aspects of the selection process. However, it is open to a licence holder, where relevant, to seek the assistance of a private sector recruitment agency with some of the tasks associated with the recruitment process.

The Commission is required to publish a list annually of 'approved recruitment agencies'. These agencies are those that they have applied to the Commission and the Commission has satisfied itself that the agencies have appropriate processes in place to support public bodies in carrying out fair merit-based selection. All approved agencies are listed on the register of licenced employment agencies and have provided a statement of compliance confirming that they will adhere to the standards and principles in the codes of practice.

During 2017 the Commission approved the following agencies:

- Hays Specialist Recruitment
- Orange Recruitment
- Mazars
- Servisource Recruitment

To date, 12 agencies have been included in the Commission's list of approved agencies. A full list of approved agencies is attached at Appendix 2

## Excluded positions

The Commission has the power to exclude, where relevant, certain unestablished positions from the provisions of the Act. Where a public body is seeking a position to be excluded from the Act, it may apply to the Commission for an excluding order. Excluding orders are generally only approved for specific short-term initiatives or in exceptional circumstances.

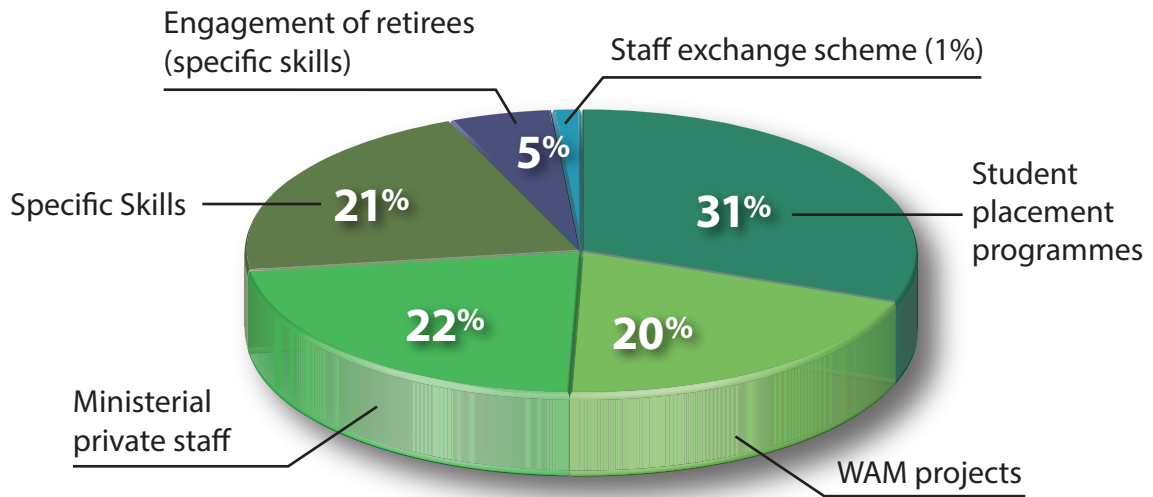
The table below details the orders which were made or extended in 2017.

Category	Orders
Student placement programmes	25
WAM projects	16
Ministerial private staff	18
Specific skills	17
Engagement of retirees (specific skills)	4
Staff exchange scheme	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>

41 orders were granted to support specific short-term initiatives i.e. student placement programmes, WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) projects and exchange schemes. 18 orders were made for ministerial private staff. The remaining 22 orders enabled the engagement of staff to short-term appointments, where the timescales involved did not allow for the running of an open competitive selection process.


The number of orders granted does not reflect the number of persons appointed as, in some cases, more than one person may have been appointed to the position or grade in question.

## Excluding Orders





# Appendixes

The background features a vertical gradient from light blue at the top to light green at the bottom. Overlaid on this are several large, semi-transparent circles in shades of green and grey, creating a layered, abstract effect.

# Appendix 1: Recruitment licence holders

Adoption Authority of Ireland

An Garda Síochána

Central Statistics Office

Chief State Solicitor's Office

Child and Family Agency

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Department of Education and Skills

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Department of Finance

Department of Foreign Affairs

Department of Justice and Equality

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Department of Rural and Community Development

Department of the Housing Planning and Local Government

Department of the Taoiseach

Health Information and Quality Authority

Health Service Executive

Irish Human Rights Commission

Irish Prison Service

Law Reform Commission

Legal Aid Board

National Shared Services Office

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland

Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas

Office of the Ombudsman

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

Ombudsman for Children's Office

Policing Authority

Property Registration Authority

Public Appointments Service

State Examinations Commission

Tax Appeals Commission

The Courts Service

The State Laboratory

The Valuation Office

## Appendix 2: Approved recruitment agencies

FRS Recruitment Society Limited

Lex Consultancy Limited

Sigmar Recruitment Consultants Limited IT Force Ltd

Recruitment Plus

Grafton Recruitment Ltd

Osborne Recruitment

Cpl Ltd

Servisource Recruitment Limited

Hays Specialist Recruitment Limited

Orange Recruitment Limited

Mazars

InterSearch Ireland

SThree Staffing Ireland Limited

## Appendix 3: Irish Human Rights and Equality

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014 introduced a positive duty on public bodies to have due regard to human rights and equality issues. The Office of the Ombudsman, which provides secretariat support to the Commission, has adopted a proactive approach to implementing this duty. It has set up a staff working group, which has held a workshop on human rights and equality and met with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

The working group is in the process of identifying all of the Commission's functions and assessing what human rights and equality issues arise in relation to those functions. It will also identify the policies and procedures which are in place to address those issues. It will then propose an action plan for implementing the duty, on foot of its findings.

The office is committed to providing a service to all clients that respects their human rights and their right to equal treatment. This is equally applicable to how it interacts with its own staff as it is essential in fostering a healthy work environment that promotes engagement, openness and dignity in the workplace.

The office's approach is underlined by the core organizational values of independence, customer focus and fairness, which are evident in both the culture of the Office and its internal policies and procedures. The office has also been proactive in providing training to staff on human rights and equality





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