**Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA)**

**Secretary to the Commissioner (Grade 7)**

**BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

On 29 September 2011 the Northern Ireland Executive announced that it intended to set up an Inquiry into abuse in residential homes in Northern Ireland, and on 31 May 2012 the First Minister and deputy First Minister announced the agreed Terms of Reference for the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry and advised the Northern Ireland Assembly of the appointment of the Chairman of the Inquiry and the panel members for the Acknowledgement Forum. The Chairman Sir Anthony Hart published the Inquiry Report on 20 January 2017.

One of the substantial and overarching recommendations made relates to the creation of a statutory Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA).

The Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019 (HIANI Act 2019) became law on 5 November 2019; it sets out the role, functions, and powers of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA).

COSICA is an Arm’s Length Body/ Non Departmental Public Body and sponsorship responsibility sits with the HIA Implementation Branch in the Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations Directorate of The Executive Office.

The Commissioner’s principal responsibility is to promote the interests of Victims and Survivors of historical institutional childhood abuse.

**ORGANISATIONAL POSITION**

The Secretary to the Commissioner is a key post within the organisation and will report directly to the Commissioner, based in the Office of the Commissioner, Belfast.

This is a fixed term appointment. You are an employee of the Commissioner and not an employee of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

This appointment is until December 2025 with the possibility of the Office of the Commissioner being extended for a further 5 years. Any change to the length of the appointment period will be communicated to staff in advance.

Direct recruits are employed under Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) terms and conditions but are not members of the Civil Service. Direct recruits enjoy the same terms and conditions as civil servants with the exception of movement across the wider NICS by way of access to NICS promotion boards, trawls, interest circulars or transfer.

Salary

Salary will reflect the NICS SO salary scale and will be within the range £52,026-£55,685 within which pay progression will be performance related. Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

This role of Secretary to the Commissioner (COSICA) is key one in the office. It includes management oversight of the team and key functions. It includes providing briefings, advice and support to the Commissioner along with responsibility for oversight of Programme development, implementation and management including policy, research and engagement. The role will also encompass oversight of Corporate Services including business and work force planning, HR, Financial Management, Governance, Information Asset Management and Engagement. The role holder is the main point of contact in dealing with the HIA Implementation Sponsor Branch in TEO.

The role holder will have a rights-based, trauma-informed, survivor-centred approach to the role in delivering the objectives of the Commissioner.

**MAIN JOB ACTIVITIES**

**Supporting the COSICA**

• Provide advice and support to the Commissioner on a range of strategic and operational factors to enable the Commissioner to execute her statutory responsibilities

• Continue to develop a range of strategies, plan and policies to implement the objectives of Office of the Commissioner.

**Finance and Governance**

• Ensure all financial and governance activities operate and adhere to TEO guidance and policy.

• Oversight of internal and external audit processes ensuring highest standards and all

recommendations implemented.

• Overall management responsibility of the COSICA budget, financial reports and expenditure

forecasts.

• Develop and monitor performance against COSICA corporate and business plans.

* Implement and review organisational, operational and reporting arrangements for COSICA.

• Revise and develop business cases in accordance with DoF and TEO departmental procedures

ensuring a high level of accountability is always maintained.

• Oversight of COSICA information management infrastructure and processes including

ensuring COSICA procedures and policies in accordance with GDPR legislation

**Human Resources including staff management**

• Overall management of COSICA team with specific line management responsibility for 2 DPs

and countersigning responsibility for 3 SOs. This includes all aspects of staff management.

including allocating work and ensuring it is completed in accordance with instructions and

within timescales, performance management, staff development, motivation, conduct and

discipline etc.

• Deliver results against HR and business objectives.

• Manage, coordinate and participate in the recruitment and selection of staff for COSICA.

• Develop and deliver an annual training plan in line with organisational needs.

• Oversee performance appraisal process of staff with specific responsibilities for Deputy

Principals.

**Programme: Policy, Research and Engagement including communications**

• Develop deep understanding of policy programme goals in order to oversee the development,

implementation and progression of programme priorities

• Oversee the development and implementation of a corporate communications and stakeholder engagement plan with external communications provider in accordance with COSICA strategic goals and review its

progress.

• Ensure all statutory duties, responsibilities and associated activities are discharged effectively. These include but are not confined to providing information and general advice to victims and survivors considering applying for Redress; monitoring specialist services for victims and survivors; monitoring the operation of the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board; establishing an Advisory Panel of victims and survivors.

* Oversee the daily running of the office.

• Implement systems to ensure efficiency of programmes and projects including leading the

development of an Advisory Panel of victims and survivors.

**Stakeholder Support**

• Oversee drafting and preparation of stakeholder briefings, policy papers, AQs and

correspondence to Ministers, relevant committees, officials, Victims and Survivor

Groups, individual victims and survivors, government agencies etc

• Engage with Ministers, officials and advisors and respond to correspondence on behalf of and

as support of the Office of the Commissioner.

• Organise regular engagement with the sponsor branch attending all required meetings.

• Develop and maintain a sufficient network of reliable contacts to enable efficient delivery and

effective working relationships and communication channels with key stakeholders,

including the HIA Victims and Survivor groups, departmental colleagues, Interdepartmental Representatives, Solicitors, members of the public etc.

**KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

The minimum requirement for the role requires a degree or equivalent qualification and at least 5 years’ senior management experience within an organisation that delivers a programme of services to the public, either directly or through a series of external delivery agencies.

The characteristics and overall level of knowledge and skills which have to be most commonly applied in this role include:

Essential criteria

* Strategic communications including external relations and public affairs experience
* Track record of engaging with senior officials and influencing government policy and strategy
* Political awareness and knowledge of the Northern Ireland Government structures
* Understand and are comfortable with the principles of operating in a traumainformed, victim-

centred and rights based manner

* Experience in financial management and Business Planning (at least two years experience in a senior management position)
* Proven Human Resource (HR) skills, including experience of line management, and having the

ability to apply HR practices and policies

* Sound knowledge of GDPR requirements and the of handling sensitive information
* Good interpersonal skills and the ability to create and maintain good working relationships with a network of officials across Government Departments and key stakeholders
* Strong organisational skills; abilty to work at pace and manage competing demands
* IT literacy
* Displays the highest levels of integrity
* Ability to adapt and respond positively to change and working at pace to meet deadlines

**Desirable Criteria**

1. Postgraduate degree in a relevant area such as law, social policy or social science.
2. Experience of governance structures and processes including engaging with audit
3. Experience of working with governance structure, systems and processes including Audit and Risk Assurance Committees
4. Experience of a senior management role in an organisation which works directly with or promotes the interests of vulnerable groups.

**CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

***Between Government Organisations***

* Frequent interaction with G7 and TEO HIA Implementation Sponsor Branch.
* Occasional interaction with G7 in TEO Retained Finance Function in relation to production of accounts.
* Occasional engagement with representatives from UK Government departments and devolved regions; ROI Government departments and international government representatives in relation to programme priorities.
* Analysing relevant developments in relation to above to provide updates on policy areas / government programmes relevant to the Office of the Commissioner’s programme
* Seeking information from work-stream leads within other public agencies to identify, extract and share key areas of learning from their respective work-streams.

**All other External Relations and Public Affairs**

* Regular interaction in the role of accompanying and providing support to COSICA to meet key stakeholders; give evidence at TEO Committee; meet First Minister and deputy First Minister; and other Executive Ministers if required. This may include meeting government officials in other jurisdictions.
* Contact with Victims and Survivors and their families locally, nationally, and internationally.

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

* Responsible for leading the work of The Office of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA), within the parameters of Part 2 of the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019. Schedule 2 of the Act sets out the powers and functions of COSICA.
* Required to establish good working relationships with victims and survivors, including victims and survivors’ groups which requires constructive thought, empathy, and meaningful and informed consultation with key stakeholders,
* Responsible for ongoing development of a robust governance and management structure for COSICA. This requires ongoing monitoring of appropriate management and reporting structures, activities, risks and issues, controls and mitigating actions, resources, responsibilities and outputs required to ensure COSICA meets her objectives and adheres to all required governance and reporting structures as required by the sponsor department, The Executive Office (TEO).
* Provide advice and briefings to the Commissioner and senior managers in TEO. This may involve liaising with other organisations and stakeholders in order to inform briefings and any policy work. Where appropriate, work with stakeholders and ensure that their views are considered and reflected in their advice to the Commissioner and senior managers.
* Where conflicting opinions arise, propose viable policy and implementation solutions with the ultimate aim of ensuring that COSICA is operated within the parameters of the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019
* Manage the varying expectations of a wide range of stakeholders and adopt appropriate communication and engagement styles to meet their information needs.

**DECISION MAKING**

***Collaboration and Initiative***

* Accountable for all major decisions when overseeing and ensuring effective and appropriate project planning for COSICA and determine how this is progressed and implemented. This includes the allocation of staff to particular work areas, the day-to-day decisions relating to key COSICA policy and implementation issues, and allocation of any resources required to meet project demands.
* Approve the content of all papers, advice and briefing, including those related to official correspondence, for the approval of COSICA and support COSICA at meetings either with or on their behalf.

***Research and Advice***

* Provide research-informed, evidence-based material to support the Office of the Commissioner’s objectives this may include originating research, drafting briefings, contributing to overall team initiatives.
* Overseeing and ensuring effective progression of research areas and policy topics in consultation and agreement with the Head of Policy and Engagement.

**MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES**

***Financial Resources***

* Managing budgeted resource.
* Contribute to processes and procedures to ensure all financial records are completed and returned within prescribed deadlines. This is to ensure full auditing requirements relating to financial expenditures are met.
* Adhere to financial procedures to monitor contracts and the use of resources in line with organisational procedures and plans to ensure deliverables are achieved.
* Responsible for ensuring that all expenditure has the necessary approvals before they are incurred, particularly where the costs might be sizeable, such as travel outside Northern Ireland.

***Leadership and Team Work***

* Main point of contact for communications and research matters in the Commissioner’s Office.
* Operate as part of a larger team and must set, progress, and contribute to the achievement of the Commissioner’s objectives. They will also be required to work with staff in the Commissioner’s Office, with occasional line management responsibilities.
* The role holder will be supporting the Commissioner in ensuring that key objectives are identified and achieved.

**RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS**

**How to Apply**

If you would like to be considered for this role, please forward your CV and Cover Letter to [lauren.farrell@thinkpeople.co.uk](mailto:lauren.farrell@thinkpeople.co.uk) , no later than 5pm on 31st May 2023.

Late applications will not be considered.

Timetable

The anticipated timetable is as follows:

• Advertisement: 3rd May 2023

• Closing Date: 31st May 2023

• Shortlisting: W/C 5th June 2023

• Interviews: W/C 3rd July 2023

Please note that these timeframes are indicative and subject to change.

For more information regarding COSICA can be gained by visiting www.cosica-ni.org, a copy of the recruitment and selection policy is also available on request.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

COSICA is committed to equality and will comply with the Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) statutory duties which requires designated public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the nine equality categories and to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief; political opinion; and racial group. The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) Section 49A requires designated public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons, and to the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life. This is not an exhaustive list of duties and requirements. The nature of the organisation is such that it must respond to the dynamic environment in which it operates and the nature of duties, tasks, knowledge, and skills required for this post will evolve and change in time. The job holder is expected to adapt to these changes and develop the role as a result.

**COSICA is an Equal Opportunities Employer. All offers of employment will be made on merit in terms of relevant experience, abilities, and qualifications as applicable.**