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

**Engagement, Policy and Communications Officer (SO)**

**April 2023**

**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 HIA 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 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 Engagement, Policy and Communications Officer is a key post within the organisation and will report to the Head of Policy and Research (DP) and will be 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 for a period up to Decemeber 2025 with the possibility of extension of 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 £32,328-£33,459 within which pay progression will be performance related. Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

The role holder will assist the Commissioner and the Office in carrying out the Commissioner’s duties and powers. The principal objectives of the role will be ensuring that victims and survivors who contact the Office receive an appropriate response and that the Office engages effectively with victims and survivors, representative groups, agencies and bodies which are likely to have contact with victims and survivors.

The role holder, as part of a wider team, will also ensure the development of research-informed, evidence-based, policy analysis, briefings and advice and will contribute to the overall evidence base for the Commissioner’s work.

The role holder will assist the Commissioner and the Office in carrying out the Commissioner’s duties and powers, including taking forward external communications to promote the Commissioner’s work, and other matters of interest, ensuring all stakeholders including victims and survivors have access to these in a timely, sensitive and appropriate manner.

The role holder will engage with Victims and Survivors of historical institutional childhood abuse and will uphold a rights-based, trauma-informed, survivor-centred approach to delivering the objectives of the Commissioner.

This is a high profile area, requiring sensitivity and a level of political awareness.

**MAIN JOB ACTIVITIES**

Assist the Commissioner in carrying out the role. The primary relevant function is ensuring the Office engages effectively and appropriately with victims and survivors and that this engagement informs the wider work of the Commissioner. This broad scope includes:

* Line manage the Policy and Engagement Officers (EO2) with responsibility to oversee first point of contact for stakeholder and victim and survivor enquiries and work as part of the team responding directly to such enquiries.
* Ensure that information, advice and guidance to victims and survivors, with reference to relevant specialist and general services that they may be able to avail of and the redress financial compensation scheme and/or referral onwards is in line with training and protocols and delivered in a professional manner.
* Engage in a sensitive, professional and effective manner with all who contact the Office, presenting a victim centred, trauma informed approach.
* Use case management system or comparable database for recording engagement data and developing reports as required from this.
* Ensure that complex and sensitive information is communicated and processed within the boundaries of Data Protection legislation; handle all personal data with extreme caution and have an awareness of the potential impacts of data loss.
* Collate, analyse and prepare draft correspondence, information, briefings and reports as required to assist line manager and Commissioner in progressing key areas across policy, research and engagement functions.
* Develop, implement and evaluate a communications and engagement strategy through a range of channels, including media, website and social media, as well as engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and organisations.
* Provide support with the establishment and running of the Advisory Panel.
* Promote awareness of the Office and create opportunities for victims and survivors to engage and develop appropriate contacts within stakeholder organisations to establish effective working relationships and communication channels.
* Develop and deliver targeted communication materials, including newsletters, press releases, social media content and organise online and face to face meetings and events as required.
* Monitor and analyse media coverage and develop appropriate responses to negative coverage.
* Provide communication and engagement support across the organisation.
* Any other duties as deemed appropriate.

**KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

Applicants must demonstrate:

* Relevant undergraduate degree
* Experience of working effectively in an engagement role with client groups
* Experience of working with others in a line management, supervisory, training, coaching or mentoring capacity in a paid or voluntary role
* Proven experience in communicating effectively, verbally and in writing, including through developing and disseminating engagement and communication materials for different stakeholder audiences, including reports, presentations and online content
* Track record of building positive working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders
* Excellent organisational skills, with the ability to prioritise and manage workloads and response accordingly to short notice requests
* Excellent IT skills, including in MS Office, information management tools and software, presenting data and information in a variety of formats.
* Proven experience of undertaking information/policy/research analysis and managing, collating and presenting information effectively and in accordance with relevant Data Protection Legislation
* Strong interpersonal skills with the ability to build relationships with stakeholders at all levels
* Ability to work independently and as part of a team
* Strong project management skills with the ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously.

**Desirable Criteria**

* Knowledge of GDPR, information governance and information management, or willingness to

learn

* Experience of engaging with or providing information and advice to vulnerable clients or groups.
* Experience of line management.

**CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

***Between Government Organisations***

An exchange of information to deliver the essential activities of the office of the Commissioner by phone, email and in writing to departmental contacts, HIA Redress Board and VSS services colleagues. Officials in other Departments and Arm’s-Length Bodies may be contacted in accordance with the work of the COSICA. This may be for relationship building (introductions) and networking so that key contacts can be identified to assist with accessing services, E.g. Department of Health (including the Health & Social Care Trusts), Department for Communities, etc

**All other external contacts**

Contact with Victims and Survivors and their families locally, nationally, and internationally.

The role holder will be expected to support the Commissioner in liaising with external organisations. The role holder will be expected to maintain relationships that are of major importance and significance to their work; including contact with Management/Middle Management, other government Departments and administrations. For the purposes of building and maintaining networks with key stakeholders in other jurisdictions and administrations where required.

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

Fact Finding and Analysis

The role holder will be the initial contact point for all enquires to the office of the Commissioner. They will be responsible for obtaining and processing sensitive and complex information from a range of individuals and organisations.

The role holder will analyse the information received in order to assess risk before signposting to the appropriate service. The role holder will contribute to scoping and data collection exercises relevant to the functions of COSICA.

The office of the Commissioner is a new organisation and many systems and processes are in development. There is an opportunity to contribute to the development of efficient and data protection compliant procedures.

**DECISION MAKING**

***Collaboration and Initiative***

The role holder will be expected to work as part of the policy and engagement team while demonstrating the capacity to work on their own initiative. The primary function of the role is to further the objectives of the Office of the Commissioner in representing the interests of Victims and Survivors and leading on Communications. The role holder will be expected to bring innovation and initiative to their work. They will report to the Head of Policy and Engagement.

**MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES**

The role holder will be required to operate as part of a larger team and must set, progress, and contribute to the achievement of office objectives. The role holder will support the Commissioner in ensuring that the organisation’s 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 , 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 19th June 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.**