



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Mánnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK

COMMISSIONER FOR VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF CRIME FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

2026

This Candidate Information Pack has been produced as a guide to help you provide the relevant information when completing the application form for the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland. These documents are only a memorandum and should not be taken as constituting conditions of appointment. The qualities required and details of how to complete the application form are set out within this pack. It is recommended that you read this information carefully before completing the application form.

An e-version of the application form may be obtained from the public appointments section on the Department of Justice's website at [Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime Northern Ireland | Department of Justice](#). This pack and the Application Form can be made available in alternative formats. Candidates are requested to advise of their requirements as soon as possible allowing for the fact that the closing date is **12 noon (UK local time) on 5 June 2025**.

Completed application and monitoring forms must be received in the Department of Justice no later than 12 noon (UK local time) on 5 June 2026. Late applications will not be accepted except in exceptional circumstances.

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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Accessibility to appointments is fundamental and the appointments process promotes and demonstrates equality of opportunity and equal treatment to all applicants at every stage of the appointment process.

The Department of Justice is committed to encouraging a diverse range of applicants for public appointments and to the principle of appointment on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. Applications are welcomed from all backgrounds regardless of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not you have dependents.

We particularly welcome applications from women, people under the age of 40, those from ethnic minority communities and people with a disability. We also welcome applications from those not currently serving on public bodies.

All applications for appointment are considered strictly on merit.

We are operating the Guaranteed Interview Scheme in this competition for applicants with a disability. Applicants with a disability who meet all of the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

CONTACTS

If you would like to speak to someone in connection with any aspect of the process or if you require an application pack in a different format such as Braille, large print, audio etc. please contact:

DoJ Public Appointments Unit	Telephone: 028 9054 3986 or Email: cwvnci.appointments@justice-ni.gov.uk
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Commissioner Sponsorship	Telephone: 028 9052 2022 or Email: DOJVWB.Mail@justice-ni.gov.uk
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Section 1: Outline of the Department of Justice and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Department Of Justice

The Department of Justice (DOJ) came into existence on 12 April 2010 following the devolution of policing and justice powers to the NI Assembly. It was established by the Department of Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 and is responsible for a range of devolved policing and justice functions, as set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010.

The role of the Department is to support the Minister of Justice in working to create a fair, just and safe community where we respect the law and each other.

In addition to its statutory functions, the Department provides resources and a legislative framework for its agencies and arms-length bodies (which together constitute most of the justice system in Northern Ireland). Together with these organisations, the Department is responsible for ensuring there is a fair and effective justice system in Northern Ireland and for increasing public confidence in that system.

Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland

Background

The Minister of Justice is currently taking forward a Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill that will establish a Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland (“Commissioner”). The Commissioner will be independent from Government, and their office will be established as an Arm’s Length Body of the Department of Justice.

The legislation will outline the remit and functions of the Commissioner. **This competition and the appointment of the Commissioner is subject to the NI Assembly approval of the provisions within the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill, receipt of Royal Assent and commencement of the legislation. Should the Bill not receive approval, an appointment will be made on a ‘Designate’, non-statutory basis.**

The Commissioner’s functions under the Bill will focus on criminal justice and the Bill will include the duties to co-operate with the Commissioner for criminal justice organisations and Victim and Witness Charters service providers. There is a possibility that the scope of the Commissioner’s role could be extended to wider than criminal justice in the future, once the Department has undertaken further work and engagement on this.

The post of Commissioner relates to victims and witnesses of crime as defined in the Victim and Witness Charters¹.

The Minister of Justice is seeking to appoint one Commissioner

The intention is that the Commissioner will take up post on Monday 14 June 2027 (subject to commencement of the legislation). Should the Bill not receive approval, an appointment of a non-statutory Commissioner Designate will be made and will take up post on Monday 14 June 2027.

Role of the Commissioner

As stated above, the role outlined below is subject to approval of provisions within the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill and commencement of the legislation. Should the Bill not receive approval, an appointment will be made on a 'Designate', non-statutory basis. Annex B outlines the key differences between the statutory Commissioner and non-statutory Commissioner Designate roles and explains the Commissioner Designate role.

The Commissioner will provide an independent, public voice and will seek to promote the interests of victims and witnesses of crime and to raise awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and witnesses of crime. The Commissioner will be able to contribute to the development of policies and legislation with a view to addressing the needs and rights of victims and witnesses of crime.

The Commissioner will lead from the front, setting out their strategic priorities in their strategic plan, which will be informed by evidence of the needs of victims and witnesses of crime, with the purpose to drive forward system improvements across the criminal justice system. The Commissioner will report annually on the achievement of their objectives through publication of an Annual Report, which will be laid in the NI Assembly.

An important aspect of the Commissioner's role will be to monitor compliance of relevant organisations with the Victim and Witness Charters. This will include identifying when victims and witnesses of crime do not consistently receive their entitlements set out within the Victim and Witness Charters, and ensuring that their issues and experiences are communicated in the public arena - with Government, criminal justice organisations, Charter service providers, and organisations that support and represent victims and witnesses of crime - in order to bring forward effective change.

The Commissioner's role will include the power to advise Government and make representations and recommendations concerning the interests of victims and witnesses of crime, with a view to bringing about improvement for victims and witnesses of crime. The Commissioner will use sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to advise and make recommendations. Subject to the passage of the

¹ Victim Charter can be found at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/victim-charter> and Witness Charter can be found at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/witness-charter>

Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill, there will be a statutory requirement on criminal justice organisations and Victim and Witness Charters service providers to respond to recommendations within 56 days.

Stakeholder engagement will be an important aspect of the role and will include engagement with senior representatives of criminal justice organisations and Victim and Witness Charters service providers.

The Commissioner will represent all victims and witnesses of crime (as defined in the Victim and Witness Charters). However, it is acknowledged that there are groups of particularly vulnerable victims and witnesses of crime who have specific needs. The Commissioner will therefore give particular attention to certain crime types, which will be defined in the Terms of Reference for the post and are likely to include domestic and sexual abuse victims and witnesses and hate crime victims and witnesses.

The Commissioner will focus on where systemic changes are needed that will benefit all victims and witnesses of crime. They are not empowered to become involved in individual cases. Therefore, the Commissioner cannot advocate for individual victims nor investigate individual cases but can draw conclusions from them for the purpose of considering a general systemic issue that needs to be addressed.

It is important to note that the Commissioner Designate is not intended to duplicate the work of support services or other established commissioners or champions.

The scope of the post does not include victims of 'conflict related offences' as defined in Section 3 of the Victims and Survivors (NI) Order 2006, which falls under the remit of the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors.

SECTION 2: Role Profile and Outcomes

Introduction

The role of the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland is outlined in the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill, which will establish this new position.

This competition, the role stated below and the appointment of the Commissioner is subject to the NI Assembly approval of the provisions within the Victims and Witnesses Bill, receipt of Royal Assent and commencement of the legislation.

Should the Bill not receive approval, an appointment will be made on a 'Designate', non-statutory basis. Annex B outlines the key differences between the statutory Commissioner and non-statutory Commissioner Designate roles and explains the Commissioner Designate role.

Key areas of responsibility

The Commissioner role will be a challenging and demanding position with a public profile that requires a high calibre of individual with appropriate skills and experience.

The overall aim of the Commissioner will be to promote the interests of victims and witnesses of crime and to raise awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and witnesses of crime.

The duties of the Commissioner will be to:

- Prepare, publish and deliver a Strategic Plan setting out their strategic priorities, objectives, programme of work and anticipated outcomes, informed by the evidence of victims and witnesses needs.
- Provide to the DoJ an annual report on delivery against the Strategic Plan in carrying out of their functions during that year and which will be laid before the NI Assembly.
- Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the interests of victims and witnesses of crime to ensure that any failings in legislation and practice are raised, and where necessary, best practice issued.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure victims and witnesses are encouraged to communicate with the Commissioner and the views of victims and witnesses are sought concerning the exercise, by the Commissioner, of their functions.
- Establish advisory group(s) as the Commissioner considers appropriate. The group(s) could advise and assist the Commissioner in identifying priorities, including key themes for consideration, research priorities and

policy issues that are appropriate to deliver improvement across a wide range of victim and witness of crime issues and communities. It could also act as an expert forum for testing ideas and initiatives.

- Keep proper accounting records and prepare an annual financial statement of accounts which is to be submitted to the DoJ and the Comptroller and Auditor General for examination. The DoJ would lay the accounts and the report from the Comptroller and Auditor General before the NI Assembly.

The powers of the Commissioner will be to:

- Monitor compliance of relevant organisations with the Victim and Witness Charters.
- Make representations or recommendations to any body or person concerning the interests of victims and witnesses.
- Issue guidance on best practice in relation to any matter concerning the interests of victims and witnesses. The Commissioner would be required to consult with relevant bodies or people that they consider appropriate before issuing guidance under this power.
- Provide advice to Government on matters concerning the interests of victims and witnesses.
- Undertake, commission or provide financial assistance for research or education activities concerning the interests of victims and witnesses or the exercise of his/her functions.
- Compile information concerning the interests of victims and witnesses; provide advice or information on any matter concerning the interests of victims and witnesses; and publish research findings, activities or advice concerning the interests of victims and witnesses.

The Commissioner will also be the Accounting Officer for their office which entails a range of duties around governance, decision making and financial management to ensure the office operates effectively and to a high standard of probity.

The Commissioner is restricted from exercising their functions in relation to an individual case but can draw conclusions from them for the purpose of considering a general system issue. The Commissioner is unable to borrow money in the exercise of its functions.

In fulfilling these statutory functions, it is critical that the Commissioner at all times remains impartial in providing advice to Government and in representing the interests of victims and witnesses of crime in the public domain.

Duties on Authorities

The Victims and Witnesses Bill will place the following duties on criminal justice organisations and on service providers under Victim and Witness Charters in relation to the Commissioner:

- Respond to any report making recommendations by the Commissioner within 56 days from the date the report is published and include action taken or proposed on recommendations or why no action will be taken.
- Provide a summary of complaints from victims and witnesses of crime and the outcomes of complaints to the Commissioner on an annual basis. The Commissioner will agree the format and content with the relevant organisations.
- Co-operate with the Commissioner in any way that the Commissioner considers necessary for the purpose of the Commissioner's functions and on such terms as can be agreed.

Outcomes

The role is intended to contribute to the following overarching criminal justice outcomes for victims and witnesses of crime, which align with the current Northern Ireland Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2026-2032:

- Support - Tailored, responsive and specialised support is accessible for all victims and witnesses of crime to help them to recover and rebuild their lives.
- Communication and Information - Ensuring information about the justice system is accessible
- Transparency and Participation - Being open and clear about the stages of the criminal justice system and the decisions made which impact upon victims and witnesses so that they feel more empowered.
- Rights and Confidence - Improving public confidence in the justice system and ensuring victim and witness entitlements are met.
- Children and Young People - The needs of children and young people who are victims and witnesses are taken into account when engaging with the criminal justice system.

Support and Resources

The Commissioner will have policy and research, communications and engagement, and administrative support, together with resources to enable them to deliver their functions.

The Commissioner will act as Accounting Officer. Further details of Accounting Officer duties can be accessed using the link: [Accounting officer appointments](#).

roles and responsibilities | Department of Finance . Accounting Officer training must be completed by all newly designated Accounting Officers at least within six months of appointment.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Time Commitment	The post will be full-time (37 hours per week), five days per week. However, as with posts generally at this level, the Commissioner will need flexibility to work such hours and at such times, as may be necessary, to discharge their functions effectively. This may require regularly working outside of normal office hours, sometimes in the evenings and at weekends. Travel within Northern Ireland and occasional travel within the UK and Ireland involving overnight stays are a feature of the post.
Working Pattern	This is a hybrid working position with flexibility for home and office working, based on business need, with an expectation of being office based for the majority of the time.
Location	The location of the post is likely to be in Belfast/greater Belfast area.
Remuneration	Salary will be on the Senior Civil Service Grade 5 scale, i.e. £88,268 - £97,070, with pay progression subject to satisfactory performance. The successful candidate can expect to be placed at the minimum point of the pay scale, although a higher starting salary within the range may be available if they have exceptionally relevant skills/experience.
Allowances	Travel and incidental expenses will be reimbursed for costs necessarily incurred on Commissioner business in line with NICS rates.
Annual Leave and Sick Absence	The postholder will be entitled to 30 days annual leave in addition to public and privilege holidays, which is currently 12. Sick absence is in line with NICS policy.
Pension	The post holder can avail of a contributory pension scheme.

Term of Appointment

The Commissioner is appointed for a term of four years. The maximum number of terms that can be served is two. A person **may** be eligible for reappointment for a second term of office, subject to satisfactory performance and Ministerial direction.

Should the serving Commissioner wish to resign from office, written notice should be provided to the Minister of Justice giving a minimum of 3 months' notice.

It is anticipated that the appointee will take up post on 14 June 2027.

Accountability and Performance Assessment

The Commissioner will act independently in the exercise of their functions. However, they will be accountable to the Minister of Justice, through the Department of Justice, for the operation of their office. An annual accountability meeting to discuss the performance of the Commissioner's office will normally be held with the Minister of Justice.

There will be regular sponsorship meetings with the Commissioner's office and Department of Justice officials throughout the period of appointment.

An annual performance review will be held each April of the Commissioner's period of appointment with the Deputy Secretary of Access to Justice to discuss their personal performance.

The Commissioner will fall under the remit of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

Briefing/Training

The Commissioner will be expected to undertake appropriate training in corporate governance and is encouraged to attend any relevant and appropriate training courses specific to their role.

Alternative arrangements can be agreed with the Department if they have previously attended an appropriate training course within the last two years.

The Commissioner is encouraged to avail of any other induction and familiarisation opportunities within the first year of office to develop their understanding of the role and the Department of Justice in general.

Code of Conduct

Although not an employee of the Department of Justice and therefore not a Civil Servant, the statutory

Commissioner will be expected to comply with the general principles of the NICS Code of Ethics. The high standards of corporate and personal conduct required are described more fully in the Code.

Security
Vetting/Criminal
Record Check

A security vetting process will be completed before appointment. Appointment will be dependent on the candidate satisfying the requirements of a Counter-Terrorist Check (CTC) and Access NI check.

Assistance for
Individuals with
disabilities

Every effort will be made to provide whatever reasonable support the successful candidate needs to help them carry out their functions.

SECTION 3: PERSON SPECIFICATION

Person Specification – Essential criteria

A criteria-based selection process is employed by the Department of Justice. Applications will be considered against the specific criteria and the criteria will form the basis of the interview.

No specific qualifications are required, but candidates must demonstrate that they have the experience and expertise appropriate to the role. Examples that evidence this can be drawn from experience gained through employment, voluntary work, caring responsibilities or other areas of personal life and interests. Candidates should take full advantage to provide sufficient practical evidence and examples of how they are suitable for this appointment. The mere mention of a skill or attribute is insufficient. Neither can the Selection Panel make assumptions from the title of a post or the nature of an organisation as to the experience, qualities and skills gained whilst in it.

Candidates will be required to demonstrate, with examples, how they meet the following **five essential criteria**. A marking framework with a scale of 1-5 will be used. **The pass mark for each criterion is 3.**

- 1. Evidence of how you have supported victims and/or witnesses which demonstrates an ability to be empathetic, understanding and appreciative of their needs and where necessary, to advocate on their behalf.**
- 2. Experience of effective leadership and strategic direction** - have proven experience of leading and setting direction as well as motivating, inspiring and guiding others towards a common purpose and vision, enabling achievement of goals and managing difficult situations with skill and sensitivity.
- 3. Experience of collaboration and influencing across sectors and of effective engagement and communication with a range of audiences** - have proven experience of collaborating and influencing at a senior level across sectors; and of instilling a strong partnership approach to solve problems and achieve outcomes in high profile and controversial areas. You will also have proven experience of engaging meaningfully with a diverse range of audiences and stakeholders, and demonstrating effective communication skills including active listening, oral, written and presentational skills.
- 4. Experience of providing effective corporate governance** - have proven experience of a strong commitment to good governance and accountability, ability to scrutinise performance, provide effective oversight and risk management.
- 5. Experience of analytical thinking and effective decision making on challenging issues resulting in improvements** – have the skills to collect and analyse information from a range of sources including research; policy; legislation; and feedback from engagements to make informed decisions. You will be able to analyse issues, and where problems arise, engage those who

need to be involved and generate options, solutions and recommendations that result in improvements and effective change.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD I PROVIDE?

To assist you more fully in completing the form, each selection criterion is explained in detail below:

Criterion 1

Evidence of how you have supported victims and/or witnesses which demonstrates an ability to be empathetic, understanding and appreciative of their needs and where necessary, to advocate on their behalf.

Examples of the type of evidence the Panel will be looking for include:

- Working with/assisting victims and/or witnesses of crime;
- An understanding of the rights and interests of victims and/or witnesses and how you actively supported them;
- How you have advocated on behalf of victims and/or witnesses of crime when required; and
- Ability to represent the views and concerns of victims and/or witnesses of crime accurately and impartially

NOTE - this list is not exhaustive and you do not have to show that you meet all of the suggested examples.

Criterion 2

Experience of effective leadership and strategic direction.

You will have proven experience of leading and setting direction as well as motivating, inspiring and guiding others towards a common purpose and vision, enabling achievement of goals and managing difficult situations with skill and sensitivity.

Examples of the type of evidence the Panel will be looking for include:

- Setting and communicating vision, direction and purpose;
- Working effectively both as an individual and as part of a team;
- Motivating and maximising the contribution of others;
- Making independent and impartial decisions within a strategic context;
- Managing diversity, sensitivities, conflict and constructive challenge; and
- Behaving with integrity in tackling difficult issues and taking responsibility for decisions.

Criterion 3

Experience of collaboration and influencing across sectors and of effective engagement and communication with a range of audiences.

You will have proven experience of collaborating and influencing at senior levels across sectors; and of instilling a strong partnership approach to solve problems and achieve outcomes in high profile and controversial areas. You will also have proven experience of engaging meaningfully with a diverse range of audiences and stakeholders, and demonstrating effective communication skills including active listening, oral, written and presentational skills.

Examples of the type of evidence the Panel will be looking for include:

- Fostering trust;
- Promoting effective relationships through engagement and collaboration;
- Influencing and negotiating to achieve consensus;
- Working in partnership;
- Exercising critical judgement;
- Effectively chairing meetings of groups with a diverse range of interests;
- Being the public face of a body or organisation including dealing with and managing the media;
- Leading or engaging in discussions on challenging topics;
- Public speaking about the objectives and work of a body or organisation;
- Listening to diverse viewpoints and handling diversities, sensitivities, conflict and challenge constructively; and
- Adapting method, style and content to match your audience including using appropriate communication methods and media.

Criterion 4

Experience of providing effective corporate governance

You will have proven experience of a strong commitment to good governance and accountability, including an ability to scrutinise performance, provide effective oversight and risk management.

Examples of the type of evidence the Panel will be looking for include:

- Promotion of and/or compliance with corporate governance responsibilities within a body or organisation;
- Managing risk and ensuring financial controls are effective;
- Using resources efficiently, economically and effectively, avoiding waste and extravagance; and
- Reporting on performance and finances of a body or organisation.

Criterion 5

Experience of analytical thinking and effective decision making on challenging issues resulting in improvements

You will have the skills to collect and analyse information from a range of sources including research; policy; legislation; and feedback from engagements to make informed decisions. You will be able to analyse issues, and where problems arise, engage those who need to be involved and generate options, solutions and recommendations that result in improvements and effective change.

Examples of the type of evidence the Panel will be looking for include:

- Showing clarity of thought in analysing and evaluating information to make decisions or recommendations;
- Listening and gathering feedback;
- Involving others in decision making;
- Identifying the main issues in complex problems;
- Solving problems;
- Making and defending difficult decisions or recommendations; and
- Being objective and accountable.

CRITERIA BASED SELECTION PROCESS

Criteria-based selection is currently the most common method of making public appointments in Northern Ireland. What this means is that the onus is on you to provide evidence of workplace or personal performance which demonstrates that you can perform to the specified standard.

Under each of the criteria headings in the application form you are required to provide specific and relevant examples of past behaviour which illustrate how you match the criteria being sought. It is not just what you have done – but also *how* you did it.

You can use examples from your working life or your personal life including any private, voluntary or community work in which you are, or have been involved.

It is not sufficient to simply list the various posts that you have held. Assumptions will not be made from the title of your post or the nature of your organisation as to the experience, qualities and skills gained.

You should structure your responses by setting a context for your examples, explain what you were trying to achieve, describe what you actually did and why, indicating your own individual contribution, and outline the outcome or results.

You are strongly advised to read the public appointments guide which is available online at <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/public-appointments-guide.pdf>.

Hard copies are also available on request.

The guide suggests the following model to help you structure your examples and express them in a logical manner: -

- Situation:** Briefly outline the situation.
- Task:** What was your objective?
What were you trying to achieve?
- Action:** What did you actually do?
What was your unique contribution?
- Result:** What happened?
What was the outcome?
What did you learn?

SUITABILITY FOR APPOINTMENT – SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Successful applicants will not necessarily have followed a traditional career path. These appointments are open to people who have relevant personal experience, or people who, for example, do voluntary or community work, or are involved in trade union activity. Please use Section B of the application form to provide practical evidence and examples of what makes you suitable for appointment to the post of Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland.

For example, you may be a member of a School Board of Governors and have developed ideas and made recommendations for school fund raising (Strategic Thinking, Governance Oversight and Accountability). You may have experience of managing a sports team (Leadership, Building Effective Relationships). You may be a committee member of a local community group with input to forward planning or have played an important role in organising a key event (Strategic Thinking, Building Effective Relationships, Leadership).

The information you provide should enable an assessment to be made of the extent to which you meet the various criteria. The information will be used for sifting and may be referred to at interview.

When completing this section you should write about **your role** and what **you** have done individually, or your role as a team member. You will need to ensure there is relevance between the examples used and the selection criteria. In addition, you should bear in mind the following points:

- use language which is simple and easy to understand in your examples to describe what **you** have done;
- use **actual** examples of what you **have** done, rather than 'how you **would** do something';
- use examples from either your working or personal life including any private, voluntary, community or trade union work you are, or have been, involved in;
- avoid statements that describe your personal beliefs or philosophies – focus on specific challenges and results; and
- **describe what you did** and how you behaved – if your example includes activities undertaken by a team, **focus on your role** and not that of the team as a whole.

It is not sufficient simply to list positions you have held.

SECTION 4: APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Completed application forms can be submitted in a variety of ways.

By post to:

Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime Appointments 2026
Department of Justice
Public Appointments
Room C4
Block C, Castle Buildings
Stormont,
Belfast BT4 3SG

Or deliver by hand to:

Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime 2026
Block A Reception
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast

Or email to:

cwvnci.appointments@justice-ni.gov.uk

no later than: **12 noon (UK local time) on 5 June 2026.**

Applicants are reminded that email is not a secure medium and that anyone who has any concerns about information security may submit their application and monitoring information questionnaire in hard copy format.

Please note that, to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:

- CVs, letters, or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms will **not** be accepted;
- If completing the application online you must use **Arial font size 12**. The layout of the application form should not be changed or altered in any way. **Any attempt to alter the form will render your application invalid and it will be excluded from consideration;**
- It is essential that you clearly demonstrate in your application form how and to what extent (including dates where applicable) you meet each of the essential criteria for the post.
- Applicants must comply with the word limits that have been set for relevant sections of this form. **A maximum of 350 words should be provided for each criterion.** Any words over this limit will not be made available to the selection panel;

- Applications will not be examined until after the closing deadline. Applicants should ensure that the form is fully completed before being submitted;
- Applicants invited for interview **will not** be eligible for reimbursement of travelling expenses;
- Successful candidates will be asked to complete a Political Activity Questionnaire form. The Committee on Standards in Public Life recommended that all candidates for public appointments be asked to declare any significant political activity (including office holding, public speaking and standing for election) that they may have undertaken in the previous five years. The question only asks for information that is already in the public domain; and
- If you are successful and are appointed as Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland, some information on your completed application form will be made public at the time of the announcement. This will include a brief summary of your career/experience; length of the appointment; remuneration; details of any other public appointments held with any related remuneration received; and your response to the political activity question.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

The Department is required to monitor the gender, ethnic origin, community background and disability of applicants to ensure that equal opportunities measures are effective. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a person with a disability as someone who has, or has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment which has had a substantial long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This includes sensory impairments, people who have had a disability in the past even though they are no longer disabled, people whose disability is likely to last for twelve months or rest of their life, and people whose condition is likely to progress or recur. Severe disfigurement is also acknowledged as a disability.

You are therefore asked to complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Information section of the application form. The information is not made available to the panel members and does not play a role in the decision making process. It will remain separate from your application form and will be treated in strict confidence.

DISABILITY REQUIREMENTS

Please let us know if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to a disability, to enable you to complete any part of the assessment process. Any information provided will be used for this purpose only and will not form any part of the selection process. Should you be successful, you will be asked to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to carry out the role effectively.

GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME (GIS)

The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability **who meet or exceed the pass mark set for the essential criteria** at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any shortlisting which may take place.

To be eligible for the Guaranteed Interview Scheme you must be considered as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which defines a person with a disability as someone who has, or has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment, which has had a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. If you qualify and wish to apply for the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, please complete the relevant section of the application form. This section of the application form will not be provided to the Selection Panel.

SELECTION PANEL

A selection panel consisting of two Departmental officials and an Independent Assessor will assess your application form against the essential criteria. The selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not you meet each criterion on the basis of the evidence you supply on the application form. Only those applicants assessed as meeting the essential criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

SIFT & SHORTLISTING PROCESS

Applications will be anonymised for the sift and shortlisting process. When assessing each application against the selection criteria, panel members will use a Marking Frame of 1-5 to determine how an applicant's skills, knowledge and experience meet each of the criteria. Applicants must score a minimum of 3 marks for each criterion. Applications which do not meet all of the selection criteria will be sifted out.

The panel reserve the right to consider either increasing or decreasing the required aggregated pass mark by one mark at a time until a sufficient pool of applicants eligible for interview is in place.

All those sifted out or not short-listed will be provided with feedback on request based on the agreed panel's assessment of their application. If an applicant wishes to contest the decision of the Panel, they should seek a review within five working days of receipt of their regrets letter. Further details about the process will be provided in this letter.

Should the outcome of the enquiry result in the applicant being invited for interview, the Department will make the necessary arrangements.

INTERVIEWS

The selection process will include a presentation and a criteria based interview.

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place between 27 July 2026 to 10 August 2026. Candidates should make themselves available on these dates. Rescheduling requests will only be considered under exceptional circumstances and are at the discretion of the Selection Panel. In person interviews are preferable, however if you have specific concerns in relation to this approach, you should make DoJ Public Appointments Unit aware of these concerns at the earliest opportunity and alternative ways to facilitate remote interviews may be considered. The decision of how interviews will proceed will rest with the Selection Panel.

The interview will be a criteria-based interview. At interview, all candidates must satisfy the Selection Panel that they adequately meet all the criteria. The Selection Panel will score applicants at interview against an agreed pass mark.

Candidates will also be required to answer questions on the standards of behaviour required of public appointees and any real, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest between their circumstances and the appointment applied for. See Annex A.

Criteria-based interviewing tests candidates against the specific selection criteria for a particular appointment. The application form gives you an opportunity to provide examples relevant to the specific criteria. These, in turn, provide the interview panel with information and evidence about you, and a deeper understanding of your abilities.

The interview is a crucial part of the appointment process and thorough preparation is essential. You can prepare for the interview by:

- reading and thoroughly understanding the selection criteria;
- reminding yourself of the examples you used in your application form and being prepared to expand on these at interview, if asked;
- rehearsing how you might relate your experiences to the interview panel, emphasising your own role and responsibilities; and
- not assuming that your qualities and experience will speak for themselves.

Applicants whom the selection panel assess as not deemed suitable for appointment will be advised of the panel's decision following interviews. They should contact DoJ Public Appointment Unit in relation to any request for any further feedback.

Applicants whom the selection panel assess as suitable for appointment and whose names are being presented for selection will be advised of this following the interview.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS TO THE DOJ MINISTER

Ministerial choice is a key element of public appointment policy that enables the Minister to indicate if they wish to have the names of candidates suitable for appointment presented in a ranked (strict merit order) or unranked (alphabetical) list.

The DoJ Minister has indicated that she wishes to receive an unranked list.

An unranked list of those successful at interview will be drawn up and accompanied by 'candidate summaries'. This will provide an objective analysis of each candidate's skills and experience, based on the information provided by each candidate during the appointment process and the panel's assessment of that candidate.

Once the Minister has made her decision, the person appointed to the post of Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland will be invited to indicate if they accept the appointment, subject to satisfactory Counter Terrorism Check/Access NI check/Barred list check.

Following a satisfactory checks, the appointment will then be formally confirmed in writing. The appointee is required to formally confirm their acceptance of the post and the Terms of Appointment.

All other interviewees will be advised in writing of the outcome of their interview once the appointment process has been completed. This will include options for requesting further feedback.

The Minister will decide if a reserve list is to be retained to cover any unforeseen vacancy that may arise within twelve months from the date of the appointment. Interviewees will be advised if they are on a reserve list.

PUBLICISING APPOINTMENTS

A press release will be published to announce the appointment. Consequently, upon appointment, the candidate will be required to complete a political activity form and provide a short biography for publication. The press release will include the candidate's name, a short description of the body to which they have been appointed, a brief summary of the skills and knowledge the candidate brings to the role, the length of the appointment term and details of the candidate's response to the political activity question.

TIMETABLE / TIMEFRAME

The deadline for receipt of applications in all cases is **12 noon (UK local time) on 5 June 2026**. Applications will be individually date stamped and the time of receipt formally recorded and acknowledged. **It is the responsibility of the applicant,**

taking into account their chosen method of delivery, to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with the Department on or before the deadline. Late applications will not be accepted except in exceptional circumstances.

Please ensure that posted applications bear the correct amount of postage as any shortfall may lead to a delay in delivery, causing you to miss the deadline. Applicants who send their application electronically are also required to meet the deadline for receipt in this office. To ensure equality of opportunity for all, applications will not be examined until after the closing deadline.

The eligibility sift is expected to take place **W/C 15 June 2026**.

Interviews are expected to be held between **27 July to 10 August 2026**.

FEEDBACK

The Department of Justice is committed to ensuring that the process used is fair and in accordance with the principles of the Office of Commissioner for Public Appointments (NI) Code of Practice. The Department is committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken at sift stage as well as at interview. The Chair of the Interview Panel will be responsible for providing feedback in respect of decisions taken.

CANVASSING

Applicants must not contact or seek support for an application from a member of the Interview Panel or any official involved in this recruitment campaign. Canvassing, either directly or indirectly will disqualify you from appointment.

DATA PROTECTION

As much of the information involved in the appointment process will be of a personal nature, the provisions of Data Protection legislation will be followed.

To ensure that you, the candidate, are aware of how and why your personal information is to be used, and with whom it may be shared, a 'privacy notice', as required by legislation, is included in the application form for your information and reference.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

The Minister may remove a person from their position as Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland, giving notice in writing, if satisfied that the individual:

- (a) has been convicted of a criminal offence;

- (b) Is the subject of any legal, criminal or statutory investigations or actions, or any that are pending;
- (c) has become bankrupt or made a composition or arrangement with their creditors;
- (d) has ever been disqualified from acting as a company director or in the conduct of a company, or are under investigation in relation to a potential Directors disqualification;
- (e) have failed to comply with the terms of their appointment or discharge the functions of the Commissioner for a continuous period of three months; or
- (f) is otherwise unable or unfit to discharge the functions as Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland.

Before submitting your application, please ensure you are satisfied that you are not precluded from applying by virtue of falling into any of the categories detailed above.

PROBITY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

'Probity and Conflicts of Interest – A Guide for applicants' is attached at **Annex A** at the end of this Candidate Information Pack.

Candidates will be tested on their responsibilities in relation to probity and conflict of interest during the selection stage of the appointment process.

PRE-APPOINTMENT CHECKS

The appointment will be subject to the successful candidate undergoing an "Enhanced Disclosure Check".

The criminal record check will be undertaken by Access NI, which is the responsibility of the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland and operates under the provisions of Part V of the Police Act 1997. Access NI enables organisations in Northern Ireland to make more informed recruitment decisions by providing criminal history information about anyone seeking paid or unpaid work in certain defined areas, such as working with children or vulnerable adults.

The successful candidate will be required to undergo a "Counter Terrorism Check". They will be required to complete and return a brief form, along with a copy of their ID, in order for the creation of a vetting account through which they would complete and submit their CTC application form online to the vetting service provider, i.e. UKSV.

All documentation relating to the security check will be destroyed by the Department once the appointment process has been completed.

Barred List Checks

The Disclosure and Barring Service keeps two barred lists:

- people who are unsuitable for working with children; and
- people who are unsuitable for working with vulnerable adults.

People on these lists are barred from regulated activity with children and vulnerable adults. It is a criminal offence for anyone who is included on a barred list to work or seek work, in regulated activity. Candidates should be aware that by submitting an application form for this post, they are confirming there is no reason why they cannot work in regulated activity.

The Access NI code of practice can be accessed via www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni.

Other Checks

Before the names of suitable candidates are presented to the Minister of Justice a Company Director's disqualification check and a bankruptcy check will be carried out.

In addition, a cross-departmental check will be carried out on the probity and performance of those candidates who currently hold or have held public appointment roles. The recorded performance and attendance in other public appointment roles will not form part of the candidate assessment by the Selection Panel but may be taken into account in selecting candidates for appointment by Minister.

Nationality Requirements

There are no nationality restrictions on this post; however, before an offer of appointment can be made to an overseas candidate, the Department will need to ensure that all UK visa and immigration requirements are met.

DOUBLE PAYING

Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that:

- they may be ineligible for consideration for this appointment if in the Department's view there is a conflict of interest, the perception of a conflict or a potential conflict, between the appointment and their existing commitments;
- where applicable you will be asked to confirm that you have permission from your employer to take up an appointment if one is offered; and
- no-one can be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. As a result applicants who already work in the public sector may not be entitled to claim remuneration or travelling expenses for this position if the duties are undertaken during a period of time for which they are already paid by the public sector.

In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying the Department reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

FORMER CIVIL SERVANTS

Former civil servants are subject to rules on the acceptance of outside business appointments, employment or self-employment for a period of up to two years after leaving the NI Civil Service. It is recommended that you follow the link to the NI Civil Service Staff Handbook: 6.01 Standards of Conduct , Section 8 on, 'Rules on the Acceptance of Outside Business Appointments, Employment or Self-Employment by Civil Servants after leaving the NI Civil Service' and read Annex 4, [6.01 Standards of Conduct](#) .

GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME (GIS)

The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet or exceed the pass mark set for the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any shortlisting which may take place.

SECTION 5: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

MONITORING INFORMATION

The Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form is for monitoring purposes only. It is required to monitor age, gender, ethnic origin, community background and disability to ensure that equal opportunity measures are effective. It will not be seen by the selection panel. As with all the information contained in the form, it is gathered, maintained and processed strictly in accordance with our Data Protection Registration, for public appointment purposes only.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Accessibility to appointments is fundamental and the appointments process promotes and demonstrates equality of opportunity and equal treatment to all applicants at every stage of the appointment process.

The Department of Justice is committed to encouraging a diverse range of applicants for public appointments and to the principle of appointment on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. Applications are welcomed from all backgrounds regardless of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not you have dependents.

We particularly welcome applications from women, people under the age of 40, minority ethnic and people with a disability who are currently under-represented in Department of Justice Bodies. We also welcome applications from those not currently serving on public bodies.

All applications for appointment are considered strictly on merit.

COMPLAINTS

Should you wish to make a complaint about any stage of the appointment process you should first direct your concerns, in writing, to:

Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime Appointment 2026
Department of Justice
Public Appointments
Room C4, Block C, Castle Buildings
Stormont,
Belfast BT4 3SG
Email: cwvnci.appointments@justice-ni.gov.uk

OTHER INFORMATION

You will be asked to declare if you:

- have been convicted of a criminal offence (other than minor motoring offences) which is not spent in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;
- are the subject of any current or pending legal, criminal or statutory investigations or actions;
- are you, or have you ever been, subject to the disciplinary process of your employer?
- have been adjudged bankrupt or made a composition or arrangement with your creditors over the past 10 years;
- have been dismissed from any public office over the past 10 years;
- have been disqualified from acting as a company director or in the conduct of a company, or are under investigation in relation to a potential director's disqualification; or
- have been a director, partner or manager of a company which has gone into liquidation, receivership or administration.

DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

Ensure that you understand the degree of publicity the appointment will attract. Read the declaration statement and provide your signature if you agree to accept the conditions.

ANNEX A: PROBITY & CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES

Standards of behaviour

There is an expectation that the conduct of anyone appointed to serve on a public body will be above reproach. Everyone who puts themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the maintenance of high standards in public life.

The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

As part of the selection process, you will be tested on your commitment to maintaining high standards in public life with particular emphasis on probity issues and conflicts of interest.

What is a conflict of interest?

Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.

No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives a lot of media attention. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?

The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual and the board that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a board member can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that a member acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?

You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give the selection panel as much information as possible.

If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?

No – each case is considered individually. If you are short-listed for interview, the panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially on the Board and how this might be handled, if you were to

be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings when an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. However, if, following the discussion with you, the panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the Board or the appointment, they can withdraw your application from the competition.

What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by the Department after my appointment?

Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life and may terminate your appointment.

What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?

This situation may arise where the applicant is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?

This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work on the board becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.

In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Chair of the board and the Chief Executive of the body concerned, in consultation with the Sponsoring Department, to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.

It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue on the board if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body's routine business. In such cases, the member may be asked to stand down from the body.

Whilst this is not a CPANI regulated competition, it is being carried out in adherence with the principles and practices of the CPANI Code.

ANNEX B: COMMISSIONER DESIGNATE FOR VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF CRIME FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ONLY APPLICABLE IF THE VICTIMS AND WITNESSES BILL DOES NOT RECEIVE APPROVAL

1. Background

- 1.1 **In the circumstance where the provisions within the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill fail to be approved by the NI Assembly in the 2022-27 mandate**, the Minister of Justice will appoint a Commissioner Designate for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland who will take up post on Monday 14 June 2027.

2. Key differences between Designate and statutory Commissioner

- 2.1 The main difference between the Designate and the statutory Commissioner is that the functions of the statutory Commissioner will be a legal requirement and the statutory Commissioner will be duty bound to perform certain functions and have powers to perform other functions. As a Commissioner Designate, the role will have no legal power for these functions and would be unable to hold Government and other bodies to account.
- 2.2 The following outlines some of the key differences relating to the non-statutory nature of the role:
- The Annual Report would not be laid before the NI Assembly;
 - The statutory Commissioner would be a corporation sole and an Arms-Length Body of the Department of Justice, whereas the Commissioner Designate would fall within the accounting boundary of the Department of Justice and financial information relating to their office would be incorporated into the DoJ annual Audited Accounts, rather than the statutory Commissioner producing their own annual Audited Accounts.
 - The statutory Commissioner would be the Accounting Officer for the ALB, whereas the Commissioner Designate would be the Senior Responsible Officer for their Office, with the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Justice having the role of Accounting Officer for the Department.
 - Both roles include monitoring compliance of relevant organisations with the Victim and Witness Charters, however in the absence of legislation, there would not be a legal requirement for relevant organisations to provide statistical information or co-operate with the Commissioner Designate.
 - The statutory Commissioner would have the power to make representations or recommendations to any body or person concerning the interests of victims and witnesses of crime and there would be a duty on criminal justice organisations and Victim and Witness Charters service providers to respond to recommendations within 56 days, whereas the Commissioner Designate would be able to make similar representations

or recommendations, but there would be no duty on criminal justice organisations and Victim and Witness Charters service providers to respond to recommendations.

- There would not be a duty on criminal justice organisations and Victim and Witness Charters service providers to provide the Commissioner Designate with a summary of complaints from victims and witnesses of crime and the outcomes of complaints on an annual basis.

3. Commissioner Designate

- 3.1 The overarching purpose of the Commissioner Designate would be to provide an independent, public voice for all victims and witnesses of crime and to raise awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and witnesses of crime. In representing the needs and interests of victims and witnesses of crime, the Commissioner Designate would help to drive systemic improvements across the criminal justice system that would improve the victims' and witnesses' experience of the criminal justice system. This would include helping to identify any areas where victims and witnesses are not consistently being provided with their entitlements set out within the Victim and Witness Charters and ensuring that their issues and experiences are raised in the public arena, with Government, with criminal justice organisations, with Victim and Witness Charters service providers and with other organisations that support and represent victims and witnesses of crime, in order to bring forward effective change.
- 3.2 As well as communicating and influencing at a strategic and senior level, the Commissioner Designate would have a person-centred approach in order to listen to victims and witnesses of crime and their representatives and understand the challenges which victims and witnesses of crime encounter in the criminal justice system. However, the role would be intended to have a focus on where systemic changes are needed that will benefit all victims and witnesses of crime and would not become involved in individual cases. Therefore, the role would not advocate for individual victims or witnesses nor investigate individual cases, although it is acknowledged that there may be individual cases which serve to exemplify systemic issues that need to be addressed.
- 3.3 The Commissioner Designate would represent all victims and witnesses of crime. However, the Commissioner Designate would also recognise and give specific attention to the specific needs of vulnerable victims and witnesses of certain crime types, which will be defined in the Terms of Reference for the post and are likely to include victims and witnesses of domestic and sexual abuse and victims and witnesses of hate crime.
- 3.4 The Commissioner Designate would be independent from government and would have autonomy to set their own priorities. They would publish a Strategic Plan that sets out their strategic priorities, objectives, programme of work and anticipated outcomes, informed by the evidence of victims' and witnesses' needs. They would also provide an annual report to the Minister of

Justice, for publication, outlining how they have exercised their functions over the year and the extent to which objectives and outcomes have been met.

4. Role Profile and Outcomes

4.1 The overall aim of the Commissioner Designate would be to promote the interests of victims and witnesses of crime and to raise awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and witnesses of crime. The role of the Commissioner Designate would be to give all victims and witnesses of crime a voice; promoting their rights as stated in the Victim and Witness Charters; raising issues with Government, criminal justice organisations, Victim and Witness Charters service providers, and support organisations; and promoting good practice, as well as driving forward systemic improvements for victims and witnesses of crime and contributing to a more cohesive, coordinated and victim/witness centred criminal justice system.

4.2 The key areas of responsibility would be to:

- ***provide a voice for all victims and witnesses of crime*** - this would require the Commissioner Designate to engage with victims and witnesses and the organisations that represent them. The Commissioner Designate would be their voice in the public arena and would be able to highlight identified issues with Government and criminal justice organisations, Victim and Witness Charters service providers, in order to drive forward systemic improvements for victims and witnesses of crime or, where appropriate, for groups of cohorts of victims and witnesses with particular vulnerabilities. The role would also include promoting the rights of victims and witnesses, as well as representing victims and witnesses on Government groups and forums to raise awareness of victims' and witnesses' issues.
- ***identify, promote, encourage and issue guidance on good practice*** with a view to encouraging the criminal justice system and Victim and Witness Charters service providers to embrace and build on such practice.
- ***review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice*** – the Commissioner Designate would have a role in:
 - *influencing* the development of any new legislation or policy that impacts on victims and witnesses of crime;
 - *scrutinizing* current legislation to highlight areas that need to be addressed; and
 - *reviewing* compliance with the law and practice.
- ***Monitor compliance of relevant organisations with the Victim and Witness Charters entitlements*** - This would contribute to the improvement of compliance with the Victim and Witness Charters and would include the:
 - *identification* of any issues that need to be addressed;
 - *raising* these issues with relevant organisations; and
 - *making recommendations* for improvement.
- ***advise and make recommendations*** to the Minister of Justice, criminal justice organisations, and Victim and Witness Charters service providers

on the basis of evidence gathered and research completed. The role would include:

- providing *advice* that will help to shape victim and witness policy;
- *highlighting* and *challenging* in relation to systemic issues requiring attention;
- *making recommendations* on how to improve the outcomes for victims and witnesses of crime.
- ***undertake or commission research*** to gain an understanding and gather evidence/information on the issues impacting on the experience of victims and witnesses of crime. The Commissioner Designate would publish research findings on their website;
- ***compile information and provide advice or information*** on any matter concerning the interests of victims and witnesses of crime, which may be published on the Commissioner Designate's website.
- ***ensure good governance*** – the role is to ensure good financial and corporate governance of the Commissioner Designate office and resources.

4.3 The remit of the role would include the following:

- Primary focus on criminal justice experience of victims and witnesses of crime.
- Represent all victims and witnesses of crime.
- Be informed by and engage with victims, witnesses, voluntary and community organisations that represent and support victims and witnesses, criminal justice statutory organisations, Victim and Witness Charter service providers, and any other relevant source.
- Include a particular focus on certain vulnerable victims and witnesses of specific crime groups (likely to be domestic and sexual abuse and hate crime).
- Be independent² from government.
- Autonomy to set their own priorities.
- Publish a Strategic Plan that sets out strategic priorities, objectives, programme of work and anticipated outcomes, informed by the evidence of victims' and witnesses' needs.
- Provide an Annual Report to the Minister of Justice, for publication, outlining how the Commissioner Designate has exercised their functions over the year and the extent to which objectives and priorities for the year have been met.
- Undertake thematic reviews and provide advice when requested by the Minister of Justice on a particular victim or witness priority.
- Work with other Commissioners where there is a common victim and witness interest (i.e., in relation to the wider societal experiences and needs of victims and witnesses of crime).

² The Commissioner Designate acts independently in the exercise of their functions. However, it is accountable to the Minister of Justice, through the Department of Justice, for the operation of their office and, through the Director of Access to Justice, for their personal performance.

- Establish an Advisory Group³ comprising of suitably experienced individuals.
- Not duplicate the work of support services or other established commissioners or champions.
- Not become involved with individual cases.
- The scope of the post does not cover victims and witnesses of 'conflict related offences' as defined in the Victims and Survivors (NI) Order 2006, which falls under the remit of the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors.

5. Accountability

- 5.1 The Commissioner Designate would act independently in the exercise of their functions. However, they would be accountable to the Minister of Justice, through the Department of Justice, for the operation of their office and, through the Director of Access to Justice for their personal performance.
- 5.2 As this would be a non-statutory position, the Commissioner Designate and their office would sit within the accounting boundary of the Department of Justice and would be sponsored by Access to Justice Directorate. The Commissioner Designate would be required to comply with requests for financial, corporate governance and performance information, as and when required.
- 5.3 There would be regular accountability meetings with Department of Justice officials.

³ Members should be familiar with the functioning of the criminal justice system and how it interacts with victims and witnesses of crime; and should have an understanding of the issues affecting victims and witnesses of crime. The group would advise and assist the Commissioner Designate in identifying priorities, including key themes for consideration, research required and policy issues that are appropriate to deliver improvement across a wide range of victim issues and communities. The Advisory Group could also act as an expert forum for testing ideas and initiatives. Group members would be on a voluntary basis, albeit with reimbursement for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. The size, membership and structure of the Panel would be for the Commissioner Designate to determine.