

**STUDENT PLACEMENT  
HUMAN RESOURCES/SHORT TERM ADVISORY TEAM**

**CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK**

Completed applications must be submitted online no later than 4.00pm on 27 August 2021.

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2-16 Gordon Street BELFAST  
BT1 2LG



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# 1. WELCOME

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in this fantastic opportunity to join us as a student placement to gain experience in the work of the Labour Relations Agency.

The purpose of this pack is to provide you with background information as you consider this.

This placement offers you an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in:

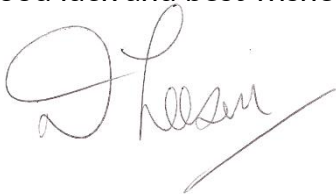
- Working with HR professionals who are passionate about creating a forward thinking organisational culture;
- Handling HR-related enquiries;
- Assisting with recruitment;
- Providing support in the implementation of HR processes and procedures;
- Managing absence cases both persistent short-term and long-term sickness;
- Performing ad hoc HR tasks to support the team.

In addition, this placement provides you scope to see how the theories and concepts studied in your degree course can be applied in an organisational context.

The role content is wide, varied and interesting and you will gain invaluable work experience, develop vital transferable skills/competencies, and give you a hands on taster into the working world and life in the Agency.

Thank you for considering the Labour Relations Agency as your student placement.

Good luck and best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Leeson', with a long horizontal stroke extending from the bottom right of the signature.

**Don Leeson**  
**Chief Executive**

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

### Introduction

The Labour Relations Agency (the Agency) is a publicly funded body established by the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, and continued by the Industrial Relations Order (Northern Ireland) 1992. We are independent of, but accountable to, the Department for the Economy.

Our independent Board, comprising members drawn from business, trade union, employment law and academic backgrounds, establishes the Agency's strategic direction. Board members are public appointments, appointed by the Minister for the Economy.

We currently employ the equivalent of approximately 60 full-time staff who operate from two locations – our Head Office in Belfast and a Regional Office in Derry/Londonderry. However, since March 2020, these offices have been closed due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and all staff are working from home. All services are being delivered by telephone and/or videoconference rather than in-person.

### Our Vision and Values

**Vision:** To be widely recognised as Northern Ireland's leading authority in promoting productive working relationships for the benefit of individuals and organisations and to support the creation of a thriving and inclusive economy.

**Purpose:** To improve employment relations, promote best employment practice and resolve workplace disputes through the delivery of quality, impartial and independent services.

**Values:** **Progressive** - forward thinking, outward looking, and creative in seeking better ways to support the economy;

**Ethical** - always acting with integrity, impartiality and utmost professionalism, and demonstrating openness and accountability;

**Exemplary** - challenging ourselves to be the best we can be and a role model in employment relations; and,

**Responsive** - listening to our customers and staff and adapting to ensure our services meet their needs.

These values underpin all that we do.

## Organisational Structure

The day-to-day operations of the Agency are overseen by a Senior Leadership Team, which comprises a Chief Executive and two Directors: the Director of Corporate Services; and the Director of Employment Relations Services. The Director of Corporate Services is responsible for the management of the Agency's accommodation, finance, HR, ICT and business support functions. The Director of Employment Relations Services is responsible for the delivery of advisory and dispute resolution services (see below).

Operational decision-making is undertaken by a wider Senior Management Team, which comprises the Chief Executive, Directors, and Employment Relations Managers (ERMs).

The current organisational structure is set out at **Appendix 1**.

## Employment Relations Services

The Agency provides a range of advisory services to promote good employment practice and advise employers and employees on their rights and responsibilities. These services include:

- Workplace Information Service (WIS) – this is a confidential advice line for employers and individuals, and their representatives.
- Briefings, seminars/webinars, and workshops – these are aimed at disseminating information and good practice on a range of employment issues and enhancing the employment relations skills of line managers.
- Document service – this online service allows employers to compile workplace documentation – from written statements of employment particulars through to employee handbooks – with guidance on compliance and good practice.

The Agency also provides a range of confidential dispute resolution services designed to deal with problems that arise in the workplace. These include:

- Conciliation – this service seeks to find a mutually agreeable solution to an employment problem or dispute where an individual could make a claim to a tribunal. There are three aspects to this:
  - **Early Conciliation** – potential tribunal claimants are required to notify the Agency of a dispute and consider conciliation before submitting a tribunal claim;
  - **Post-claim conciliation** – once a tribunal claim has been submitted, the Agency continues to be available to the parties to settle their dispute through conciliation; and,

➤ ***Employer-led conciliation*** – the Agency provides a service to employers who wish to avoid the risk of a tribunal claim by using conciliation to resolve an employment matter.

- Arbitration – where a solution to a problem or disagreement to an individual dispute cannot be found, and the parties wish to avoid a tribunal, our arbitration service provides a quick, confidential, non-legalistic process to resolve the matter. Arbitration decisions, and remedies that flow from these, are legally enforceable in the same way as tribunal decisions.
- Mediation – this is an effective process for restoring positive working relationships, using a mediator to work with those in conflict or dispute to find a mutually agreed resolution to overcome their differences.
- Collective Conciliation – this service aims to help employers and trade unions resolve disputes typically affecting larger numbers of employees.

## **Influencing Employment Relations Policy**

As well as being a service provider, the Agency has a key role in working with representative bodies of employers and employees to facilitate discussion and seek to influence strategic employment relations issues. These bodies include the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Chambers of Commerce, Institute of Directors (IoD), and the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU). We also work with all the main sectors, including the public, private, education and research, and voluntary and community sectors.

The Agency chairs and facilitates two key fora of stakeholders:

- **The NI Employment Relations Roundtable** – this promotes the strategic importance of strong and equitable employment relationships and industrial relations to economic competitiveness and social wellbeing.
- **The NI Engagement Forum on Covid-19** – established in March 2020 at the request of the NI the Executive, the Forum provides advice on Covid-19 matters as they apply to workplaces and labour market.

## **Corporate Services:**

The primary areas of responsibility for Corporate Services are in the improvement and/or development of:

- Corporate Governance Support;
- Human Resources;
- Finance;
- Information and Communications Technology;
- Communications, public relations, information, publications; and

- Facilities.

A three-year Communications Strategy ended in March 2021. This led to a number of important developments:

- New corporate branding;
- A new more accessible and customer centric website in June 2019, which is performing well in terms of a lower 'bounce' rate, increased visits, and longer stays;

The introduction of the Agency's social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) were activated. These channels have steadily increased the number of followers, and engagement rates are significantly higher than comparator organisations.

- Increased its media profile significantly, featuring regularly in newspaper articles and with staff appearing on television and radio to discuss topical employment relations issues more often than ever before.
- Increased awareness of the Agency and its services.

### **Further information about the Labour Relations Agency**

More information about the work of the Agency is available at: [www.lra.org.uk](http://www.lra.org.uk)

### 3. JOB DESCRIPTION

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>JOB TITLE:</b>     | <b>Student Placement</b>   |
| <b>DIRECTORATE:</b>   | Human Resources (HR) / Short Term Advisory   |
| <b>PAY BAND:</b>      | £18,597 per annum (under review)<br><br>Student placement is analogous to NICS AA role for pay purposes.   |
| <b>DURATION:</b>      | Temporary – This appointment will be up to 51 weeks, with the possibility of an extension depending on business and operational need and funding |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>      | Belfast* or Derry/Londonderry offices *<br><i>*Belfast, Gordon Street relocating to James House in April 2022</i>                                |
| <b>REPORTS TO:</b>    | Employment Relations Manager [ERM]   |
| <b>HOURS OF WORK:</b> | Full-time (37 hours per week)<br>Flexible working arrangements available   |

### 4. KEY PURPOSE

An opportunity exists in the Agency for an enthusiastic placement student who is keen to gain hands on work experience in the Human Resources / Short Term Advisory team.

The purpose of the job is to support the Human Resources team in the delivery of a full range of HR-related services and to provide administrative support, particularly in the fields of system management, policy work and promoting best practice. In carrying out their duties the successful student will also have an opportunity to work collaboratively with the Short Term Advisory team.

You will have the opportunity to engage with key stakeholders in promoting best employment relations practice and key policies.

In addition, you will build a portfolio of knowledge, practical experience and skills in areas such as employee relations, staff wellbeing and engagement and building capability.



This placement is expected to give you an opportunity to see how the theories and concepts studied in your degree course can be applied in an organisational context.

You will gain invaluable work experience, develop vital transferable skills/competencies, and get a taster of the working world and life in the Agency.

## 5. JOB OUTLINE AND KEY SKILLS

The successful student will be a member of the Human Resources team and will gain valuable experience in all area Human Resources, as well as working collaboratively with the Short Term Advisory Team, including policy work and promoting best practice as an exemplar employer.

You must work in a proactive and positive way to promote the work of the Agency and its services, keen to:

- Drive our strategic HR messages and supporting the delivery of key business objectives;
- Provide an exemplary and robust HR service to all our customers.

The main areas of responsibility will include:

- Case management support and advice on employee relations issues such as performance management, capability, absence and disciplinary;
- Handling HR-related enquiries from staff and line managers;
- Assisting with recruitment processes;
- Providing support in the implementation of HR processes and procedures;
- Performing ad hoc HR tasks to support the team;
- Co-ordinating training and development activities across the Agency;
- Absence management and updating the Human Resources system accordingly;
- Contributing to the continuous improvement of internal HR systems and practices;
- Carrying out all HR activities in a professional way that ensures an effective and efficient service delivery to managers, staff and our customers;
- General administrative duties, as required.

There are a number of specific project(s) which the successful student may be responsible for.

These include:

### **Human Resources Systems**

Maintaining the HR system to the standards required by the Agency, including the accurate input of data and the production of regular and ad hoc management reports. The HR system is provided by Hallmark Solutions.

Assisting with the implementation, development and maintenance of the new intranet/App and internal communications.

### Health and Wellbeing Activities

Support internal/external collaborative working and play an active role in assisting the HR team to successfully deliver the Agency's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Agency produces an annual Health and Wellbeing Calendar of events. The successful student would have responsibility for researching National campaigns and collating appropriate resources for inclusion in staff communications, in addition to promoting and scheduling Health and Wellbeing Activities for staff.

### Other Exciting Projects

Support the HR team with the delivery and implementation of key themes outlined in our Corporate Plan, whilst ensuring the provision of a high quality HR service to customers and stakeholders of the Agency, namely:

- IIP action plan as the Agency continue on the journey to Platinum;
- Going Paperless.

*As duties and responsibilities change and/or develop the job outline may be reviewed and subject to amendment, in consultation with the post holder, during the Personal Development Review with line manager or placement review meetings.*

## 6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

|                            | Essential Criteria  | Method of Assessment              |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Education / Qualifications | <p>1. Working towards a third level qualification. This refers to a degree or equivalent level (e.g. NVQ Level 4) in one of the following fields:<br/>management, human resources, employment relations, employment law, business systems, or organisational studies, and having successfully completed 2 years of this degree.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>2. A minimum of five GCSEs at Grade C or above (or equivalent) including Maths and English.</p> | Curriculum Vitae and Certificates |
| Experience                 | <p>1. Suitability for this placement opportunity.</p> <p>2. What skills, knowledge and experience will you bring to the role?</p> <p>3. What development do you hope to gain from this placement opportunity?</p> <p>4. What is your motivation for applying.</p>   | Student Placement Form            |

## 7. DESIRABLE CRITERIA

Should we receive a high number of applicants, we reserve the right to further shortlist using the following criteria:

- Student Membership of CIPD or currently studying a CIPD qualification.

## 8. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment for this competition will comprise of the following key elements:

- Stage 1      Formal screening of Curriculum Vitae and Student Placement form.
- Stage 2      Structured interview, will involve discussing your responses outlined on the Student Placement form as well as three lead competency based questions on the following competencies:
- i.     **Delivering at Pace**
  - ii.    **Collaborating and Partnering**
  - iii.   **Leading and Communicating**

## 9. COMPETENCIES

A synopsis of the ten competencies in our Competency framework is set out below:

**Note:** references to the 'Agency' in our competency framework can be interpreted to mean an organisation which you have obtained the relevant competency level.

### Strategic Cluster – Setting Direction

#### 1.    **Seeing the Big Picture**

Seeing the big picture is about having an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how your role fits with, and supports, organisational objectives and the wider public needs. For all staff, it is about focusing your contribution on the activities which will meet Agency and Programme for Government goals and deliver the greatest value. At senior levels, it is about understanding the political context and taking account of wider impacts, including the broader legislative agenda, to develop long term implementation strategies that maximise opportunities to add value to the citizen, support economic, sustainable growth and help to deliver the Northern Ireland Executive's priorities.

#### 2.    **Changing and Improving**

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. For all staff, it is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways. At senior levels, this is about creating and contributing to a culture of innovation and allowing people to consider and take

managed risks. Doing this well means continuously seeking out ways to improve policy development and implementation and building a more flexible and responsive Agency. It also means making use of alternative delivery models including digital and shared service approaches where possible.

### **3. Making Effective Decisions**

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions. At senior levels, leaders will be creating evidence based strategies, evaluating options, impacts, risks and solutions. They will aim to maximise return while minimising risk and to balance political, legislative, social, financial, economic and environmental considerations to provide sustainable outcomes.

## **People Cluster – Engaging People**

### **4. Leading and Communicating**

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens. At senior levels, it is about establishing a strong direction and a persuasive future vision, managing and engaging with people with honesty and integrity, and upholding the reputation of the Agency.

### **5. Collaborating and Partnering**

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the Agency, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions. At senior levels, it is about delivering business objectives through creating an inclusive environment, encouraging collaboration which may cut across Agency, organisational and wider boundaries. It requires the ability to build constructive partnerships and effective relationships with Ministers and their Special Advisers.

## **6. Building Capability for All**

Effectiveness in this area is having a strong focus on continuous learning for oneself, others and the organisation. For all staff, it is about being open to learning and keeping their knowledge and skill set current and evolving. At senior levels, it is about ensuring a diverse blend of capability and skills is identified and developed to meet current and future business needs. It is also about creating a learning and knowledge culture across all levels in the organisation to inform future plans and transformational change.

### **Performance Cluster – Delivering Results**

## **7. Delivering Value for Money**

Delivering value for money involves the efficient, effective and economic use of taxpayers' money in the delivery of public services. For all staff, it means seeking out and implementing solutions which achieve a good mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay, thus reducing the risk of fraud and error. People who do this well base their decisions on evidenced information and follow agreed processes and policies, challenging these appropriately where they appear to prevent good value for money. At senior levels, effective people embed a culture of value for money within their area/function. They work collaboratively across boundaries to ensure that the Agency maximises its strategic outcomes within the resources available.

## **8. Managing a Quality Service**

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches appropriately and effectively to support service delivery. At senior levels, it is about creating an environment to deliver operational excellence and creating the most appropriate and cost effective delivery models for public services.

## **9. Delivering at Pace**

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times. At senior levels, it is

about building a performance culture to deliver outcomes with a firm focus on prioritisation and addressing performance issues resolutely, fairly and promptly.

## 10. Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners

Being effective in this area is about maintaining an economic, long-term focus in all activities. For all, it is about having a commercial, financial and sustainable mind-set to ensure all activities and services are delivering added value and working to stimulate economic growth. At senior levels, it is about identifying economic, market and customer issues and using these to promote innovative business models, delivery partnerships and agreements to deliver greatest value; and ensuring tight controls of finances, resources and contracts to meet strategic priorities.

## 10. COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW

Interviews for this post are scheduled to take place early September 2021.

## 11. INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

If this is your first experience of an interview that will be using competence-based questions, bear in mind that it does not require you to:

- Talk through previous jobs or experience from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

**A competence-based interview does however require you to:**

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfil the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

**In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:**

- 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; and
- Result – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competences. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

### **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form**

The online portal includes an Equal Opportunities Monitoring section, which should be completed. Please read the guidance notes provided to help with completion. The monitoring information will **NOT** be made available to the shortlisting/interview panel.

### **Closing Date for Applications**

Online application forms cannot be submitted after the advertised closing date and time.

### **Hard Copy Applications**

If prior approval has been granted to complete a hard copy application form it should be returned in an envelope marked 'Private and Confidential' together with the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form to:

Human Resources  
Labour Relations Agency  
2- 16 Gordon Street  
BELFAST  
BT1 2LG

### **Disability**

If you have a disability that prevents you completing the online application process, please contact [claire.kilpatrick@lra.org.uk](mailto:claire.kilpatrick@lra.org.uk) or telephone 028 9018 3142 for alternative arrangements to be made.

### **Canvassing**

Any attempt on the part of a candidate to enlist support for their application through any person, except as a named referee, will disqualify that candidate from the process. Canvassing means contact or communication at any time in any manner to anyone involved in the recruitment process of the post for which they are applying.



## **Data Protection**

Please ensure that the details given on your application are correct. The data provided by you will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Your personal data will be:

- Processed lawfully, fairly and transparently;
- Collected for specified purposes, and not processed for other purposes;
- “Just the right amount” of data for the task at hand – not too much, but enough to do the task accurately;
- Accurate and up to date;
- Kept no longer than necessary; and
- Processed securely.

In addition, the confidentiality of community background monitoring information is protected through Regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

All application forms and associated documentation will be treated in the strictest confidence and any information only disclosed in the event of a legal case against the Agency or to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in the event of a claim of discrimination.

## **Communication**

All candidates will receive email communication following the shortlisting phase of the recruitment and selection process indicating the status of their application. All interviewed candidates will receive a letter via email indicating the outcome of their interview.

## **Offers of Employment**

The successful candidate will receive a provisional letter of offer. Any offer will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory references, a self-disclosure of criminal convictions and a medical summary (which will inform a decision on whether a referral to Occupational Health is appropriate). Relevant eligibility to work in the UK checks will be carried out.

## **Changes in personal circumstances**

Please ensure Human Resources are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances.

## **Transgender Requirements**

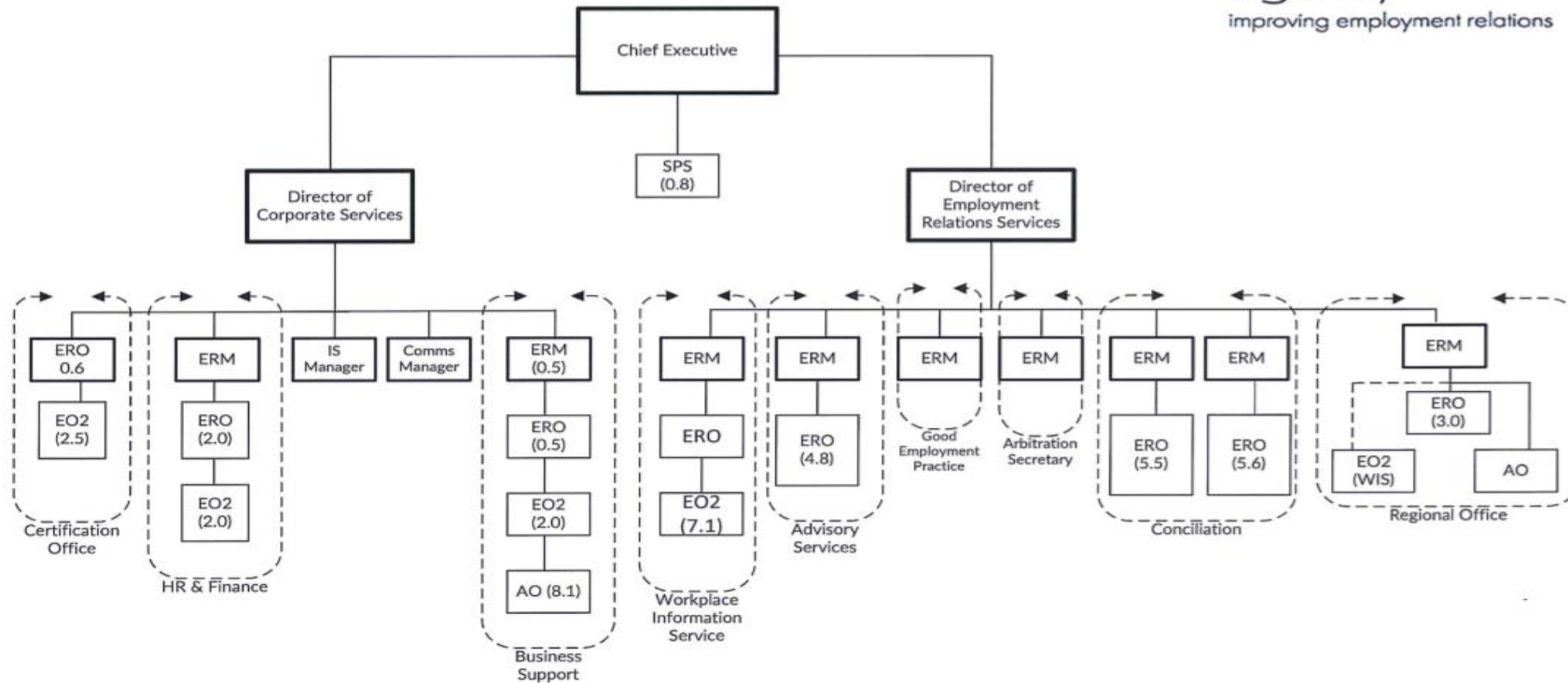
Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process, please contact the Human Resources in confidence. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

## **Communication between the Agency and You**

Human Resources will communicate with you primarily through email.

12. APPENDIX 1

Current Structure



ERM (Employment Relations Manager) equivalent to NICS Deputy Principal/ ERO (Employment Relations Officer) equivalent to NICS Staff Officer



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