



Annual Report 2020



An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí
Public Appointments Service

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Joint Introduction from the Chairperson of the Board and the Chief Executive

It has been a challenging year for the Public Appointments Service (PAS), in trying to respond effectively to the pandemic, while also ensuring that any impacts on clients, candidates, staff and governance in PAS were carefully managed.

PAS has always been a very connected organisation with a strong culture of collaboration and community. The pandemic transformed how PAS worked overnight and we recognised the importance of retaining a strong sense of engagement and connection between staff and the organisation as the situation evolved. Throughout the pandemic, PAS has prioritised the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce and staff have responded by delivering to a high standard and volume during a very challenging time.

A key feature of our response has been a strong commitment to cross-organisational collaboration, designing solutions in partnership with staff across the organisation. This approach has facilitated high levels of engagement, creativity and innovation and has allowed PAS to meet the needs of customers and adapt quickly as the situation has evolved.

PAS successfully implemented creative digital solutions to enable it to continue operating throughout the pandemic. We are very proud that PAS was able to progress successfully with all our recruitment and selection processes, in accordance with the CPSA Codes of Practice, despite the many challenges we faced.

This required a significant scaling-up of the organisation's digital delivery capability and an organisation-wide transformation of all core business processes. Transitioning to a fully online operating model has enabled PAS to maintain and enhance standards of service delivery.

2020 was also a challenging year for selection board members and for those PAS Representatives serving on selection boards with the rapid move to remote interviewing for all stages of the selection process. With the support of PAS, selection board members met this challenge and continued to provide a high quality service to us and our candidates.

Working collaboratively with clients and candidates throughout the pandemic has ensured that the customer remains at the centre of everything we do, and we have sought and responded to customer feedback throughout.

2020 also saw the publication of our new Statement of Strategy (NUA) 2020-2023, following a comprehensive strategy development process which incorporated robust environmental context analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement. As part of this process we agreed on the mission, vision and values for PAS to guide strategic priorities and decision-making, and the direction of PAS over the lifetime of this Strategy. A comprehensive implementation framework has been developed to support delivery of the strategy and an engagement strategy will keep the organisation connected to the strategic priorities through the lifetime of the strategy.

We aim to develop stronger public recognition of PAS, to attract more diverse and high-quality applicant pools. To this, we significantly developed our approach to both Marketing & Communications and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in 2020. This allowed us to increase our capacity to reach the widest audience for the variety of roles we have on offer and attract talented individuals.

Attracting diverse candidates is a major element of the PAS strategy and underpins our approach to policy engagement and outreach, which continued in 2020. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which was finalised in 2020, has set a roadmap for PAS in this area for the next three years.

None of this could have been achieved without the guidance and support of the members of the Board of PAS and of the Audit Committee in ensuring that we continued to meet the highest governance standards in fulfilling our statutory public service selection and recruitment obligations and providing quality services to our clients and customers throughout this very challenging period. We are very appreciative of their contribution to our success.

Finally, we would like to thank our former PAS Board member, Barry Quinlan, for his contribution to PAS during his time with us, and would like to welcome Mary Hurley to the Board of PAS.

Shirley Comerford, PAS Chief Executive

Tom Moran, Chairperson of the Board

About the Public Appointments Service

The Public Appointments Service is the recruitment and resourcing service provider for client organisations in the civil and public service. It is responsible for the sourcing, assessment and delivery of quality candidates to public service clients. It runs a wide range of 'openly advertised' recruitment competitions and 'interdepartmental' promotion competitions within the Civil Service. The activities are primarily focused on the sourcing of candidates for roles in the Civil Service; the most senior roles in Local Authorities; trainee Garda for An Garda Síochána; and a range of management, executive and specialist roles across the civil and public service. The Public Appointments Service also has a key role in the identification of suitable members for State Boards.

Recruitment to the civil service and a range of other public bodies operates under the provisions of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Acts, 2004 to 2013. The Public Appointments Service operates under licence from the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) and is independent in its operations. In carrying out its recruitment and selection processes, it complies with the Codes of Practice published by the CPSA, which ensure that fair and open processes are in place. Where the Codes do not apply, it adheres to the same core principles in carrying out its functions.

In 2020, the Public Appointments Service processed 85,931 applications, conducted 9,481 interviews and made 5,240 appointments to a range of complex roles across a diverse range of client organisations.

The Strategic Objectives and Key Trends in 2020

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the Public Appointments Service are shown below.



These objectives were published in the Statement of Strategy (Nua) 2020-2023, which was officially launched on 19th October 2020 by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath. The development of the Strategy followed a comprehensive strategy development process which incorporated robust environmental context analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement, with feedback loops designed into the process. It also included a comprehensive review of the mission, vision and values of PAS.

A comprehensive implementation framework has been developed to support delivery of the strategy and an engagement strategy will keep the organisation connected to the strategic priorities through the lifetime of the strategy. The implementation framework identifies signposts that PAS will monitor progress against during the lifetime of the strategy. An organisational performance dashboard has been developed

to measure and report on organisational performance. A strategic programme of work provides a visual roadmap of how PAS plans to achieve its strategic objectives across seven work-streams, detailing the projects, initiatives and new ways of working that PAS will deliver. The work-streams are:



Alongside the strategic programme of work, three key strategic projects have been initiated:

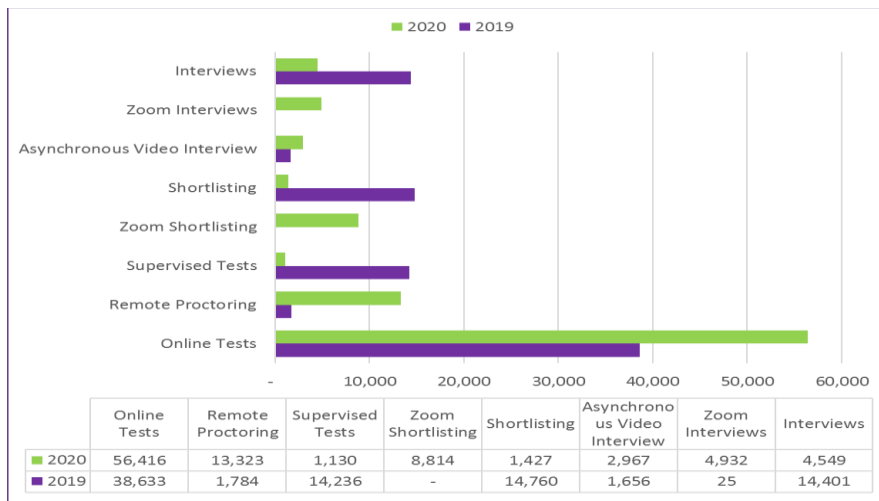
- Digital transformation of the PAS recruitment platform (NOVA)
- Refurbishment of PAS premises (Chapter House)
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

These projects will be delivered through a Project Management framework, which is aligned to the Public Service Project Management Framework and is supported by a PAS specific Project Management Toolkit.

Key Trends in 2020

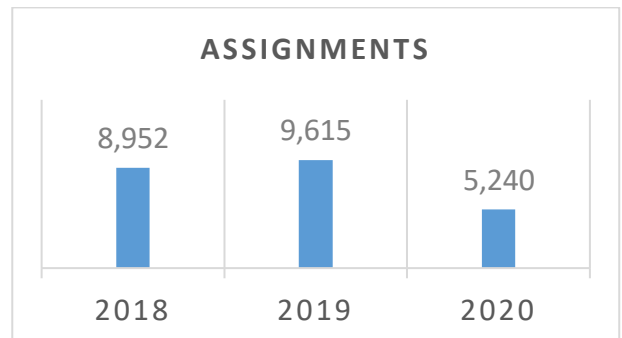
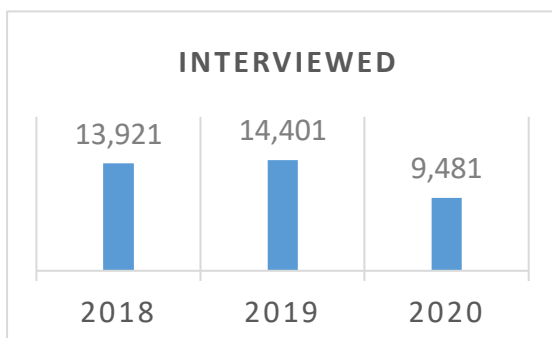
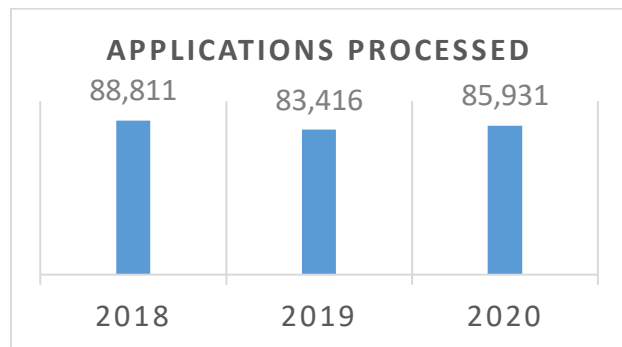
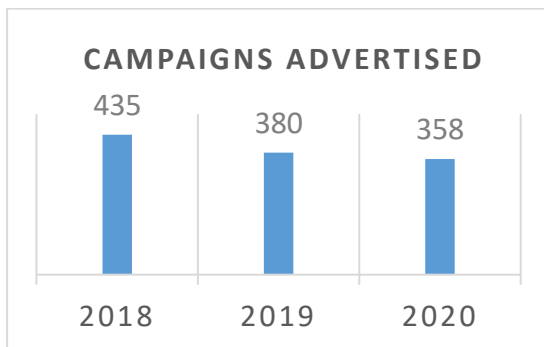
It has been a challenging year for PAS, in trying to respond effectively to the pandemic, while also ensuring that any impacts on clients, candidates, staff and governance in PAS were carefully managed.

The table below illustrates the scale and types of recruitment activity undertaken.



Asynchronous Video Interviews - recorded responses submitted by candidates in response to set questions
Remote Proctoring – online tests supervised remotely

The tables below demonstrate activity in 2020 comparison to 2018 and 2019.



Recruitment Delivery in 2020

In March 2020, PAS implemented a number of measures to enable it to continue operating throughout the pandemic. These measures were developed in accordance with public health guidelines and all relevant health and safety considerations (including a duty of care to clients, candidates, and staff) to ensure PAS could continue to deliver recruitment services for the civil and public sector, and progress competitions in accordance with the CPSA Codes of Practice.

All activities are currently undertaken remotely, and PAS are primarily using the *Zoom* video conferencing facility for remote interviewing. A range of measures were put in place to ensure that remote interviewing was safe, secure, easy to use for selection board members and clients, and could be used as an appropriate and reliable assessment tool. Remote interviewing has worked very well and is providing a consistent, accessible assessment process which does not have to be changed as Ireland enters different levels of lockdown.

PAS initiatives were supported with informed, accessible and up-to-date information for candidates and clients. PAS developed a microsite on publicjobs.ie dedicated to updates on the status of recruitment competitions, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and contact details for any queries.

PAS has developed a number of supports for selection board members (interviewers) and candidates who are engaging in the process. The supports put in place include:

- Data Protection Advice for Selection Board Members
- Remote Interviewing Guidelines for Selection Board Members and PAS Representatives
- Selection Board Member Training Video – Remote Interviews
- Pre-Interview Test of facility for Selection Board Members
- Pre- interview Test of facility for candidates

Dedicated communications were also collated and delivered to our client base to ensure clients were kept informed, during an ever-changing situation.

Number of Campaigns

The number of campaigns at 358 for 2020 was broadly in line with the 2019 level of overall activity, when 380 recruitment campaigns were initiated. This, given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic from (and particularly in) the second quarter of 2020, represented a significant continuing level of overall recruitment activity for PAS last year.

Number of Interviews Held

Despite the curtailment of all face-to-face interview activity from March onwards, in overall terms, the total number of interviews held at 9,481, while down from 14,401 the previous year, remained significant. This reflects the impact of the pandemic, the time needed to move PAS's entire model of operation from a face-to-face interview format to a remote interview platform, and timing factors around the running of large volume competitions. Asynchronous interviews (where recorded responses are submitted by candidates in response to set questions) increased from 1,656 in 2019 to 2,967 in 2020, up almost 80%. Such interviews initially tended to be more akin to video shortlisting although they are increasingly replacing the preliminary interview stage.

The move to a *demand led* recruitment model for many of our larger volume campaigns, whereby the number of candidates invited to interview is directly linked to specific vacancies, has resulted in fewer interviews which would previously have taken place to create large panels of suitable candidates.

Number of Assignments Made

The reduced number of assignments from 9,615 in 2019 to 5,240 in 2020 demonstrably reflects the impact of the pandemic, particularly during the second quarter, as the demand fell with many clients being initially reluctant to on-board new staff remotely. However, demand increased significantly over quarters three and four.

Online Testing

Remotely delivered objective testing increased from 38,633 tests undertaken in 2019 to 56,416 tests in 2020, up 46%. This significant increase in online tests by job seekers during 2020 can be expected to be more fully reflected in interview number and assignment levels during 2021.

Delivering Recruitment Excellence

Customer at the centre -Enhancing our processes and service design
Market Positioning
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Customer at the centre – Enhancing our processes and service design

PAS aims to provide a world class assessment process, informed by latest developments, research and international benchmarking. This includes networking with international Work and Organisational Psychologists in the recruitment field, including the Cabinet Office and the Police College in the UK, Selor in Belgium and with members from EU organisations and international bodies across the world.

The impact of Covid-19 brought about a sudden disruption to the PAS business model and presented significant challenges to the delivery of a quality recruitment service to clients. This was alongside an urgent need to resource key roles across the public service that were critical to combatting the global pandemic. This led to unprecedented challenges for PAS in terms of remote assessment. While PAS had excellent foundations in the use of online tests, good experience in remote proctoring, and had started using recorded/ asynchronous Interviews on a number of pilot campaigns, the move to wholesale remote assessments was a daunting one. In order to maintain recruitment activity, PAS fast-tracked the adoption of video technology to transition to shortlisting and interviews online.

Each competition was also reviewed to develop the best way of assessing the required skills and competencies in the new environment, ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion was central to the approaches to be taken. In addition to introducing remote proctoring or online hosting for a range of assessments, PAS also developed a range of new approaches. The remotely delivered assessments included asynchronous interviews, presentations, role plays and supervised online testing. This required a significant scaling-up of the organisation's digital delivery capability and an organisation-wide transformation of all core business processes.

Given the unprecedented level of change, PAS endeavoured to ensure that the needs of candidates and selection board members were at the forefront when considering viable options. Stakeholder surveys

confirmed a high level of satisfaction from selection board members and candidates with the new processes. In order to support the needs of candidates, selection board members and clients, PAS also developed a suite of digital supports which included training videos, guidance documents and a platform for one-to-one mentoring in the use of video technology.

PAS also created two new E-learning modules on Job Description/Person Specifications and Shortlisting, which have also been shared with clients.

Transitioning from a largely paper-based service to an online operating model has enabled PAS to maintain, and even enhance in some areas, standards of service delivery. Working collaboratively with clients and candidates throughout the pandemic has ensured that the customer remains at the centre of everything the organisation does. Undoubtedly the current disruption has changed and significantly advanced digitalisation capabilities and it will continue to redefine the recruitment landscape.



In addition to adapting to different assessment methods, the numbers of applications received for various roles across a range of recruitment competitions conducted by PAS have significantly increased over 2020 (an increase of 50% across some competitions). PAS will continue to ensure that the organisation remains agile and proactive in adapting assessment models, as and when required, to meet this new challenge.

Professional and Technical Recruitment

Demand continued to be high throughout 2020 from client organisations for recruitment and selection campaigns for Professional and Technical roles. Competitions for specialist roles, which attracted a large volume of applications, comprised a significant part of 2020 recruitment in respect of Professional and Technical recruitment. These larger competitions were generally used to create panels from which all clients could fill vacancies, including various ICT and accountant roles, and other competitions such as Conservation Ranger which allowed vacancies to be filled in a number of locations. In addition, more specialised or unique competitions were advertised, including Legal Executive for the Data Protection Commission and Educational Psychologist in the National Education Psychological Service. As previously discussed, 2020 also brought many new challenges including the need to ensure that the Public Service was appropriately resourced to support the people of Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic and suitably

resourced to deal with the implications of Brexit. As a result, the Professional and Technical recruitment function conducted several recruitment processes for the HSE, in addition to progressing several vital competitions for Department of Agriculture, including Assistant Agricultural Inspector and Veterinary Inspector. These requirements continue to be a priority for the country and will also be a significant area of work for Professional and Technical Recruitment for 2021.

52 Professional and Technical competitions were advertised during 2020 (attracting over 13,000 applicants) and over 500 assignments were made to client organisations during the year.

Large Volume Recruitment

PAS commenced 2020 with panels of candidates in place for vacancies across a number of generic grades. Initially in quarter one demand continued at the same pace as quarter four 2019. However, from March through to May, demand slowed somewhat as client organisations dealt with the restrictions imposed by the response to the pandemic and managing the remote working situation for current employees. However, demand increased significantly in June and continued to increase throughout the remainder of the year.

New competitions were advertised in 2020, including Nationwide Clerical Officer, Assistant Principal, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Graduate level posts and Temporary Clerical Officer. A demand led approach was applied to all Large Volume competitions, and for the Clerical Officer posts, further changes to the process has reduced the number of candidates turning down offers of appointment at clearance stage.

In response to Covid-19, PAS delivered under significant pressure in the area clerical and administrative recruitment, including responding to priority requests for clerical staff from clients most impacted, including the Department of Social Protection, the Health and Safety Authority, the Department of Health and the HSE, and filling these vacancies at short notice. An additional batch of graduate recruits from the 2019 Administrative Officer competition were assessed and assigned to the Department of Health in November 2020. A new stream, specifically for the health area, was advertised and managed for the Graduate level intake in 2020, and assignments will be made early in 2021.

PAS also collaborated with the Department of Agriculture and the Revenue Commissioners to assign Clerical Officers to Brexit critical positions.

Senior Executive and State Boards Recruitment

The Senior Executive Recruitment function successfully completed a range of recruitment campaigns for senior level posts, including CEO roles for State Bodies and Local Authorities, and Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General roles in Government Departments (where it provided assistance to the Top Level Appointments Committee in the recruitment process). A wide range of State Board roles were also filled during 2020.

Justice Sector Recruitment

The Justice Sector Recruitment function continued to be innovative in developing new recruitment methods for their competitions. This included the introduction of remotely delivered role play exercises for the Recruit Prison Officer competition, which replaced the previous group exercise, and providing online Irish assessments for Garda Trainee candidates who didn't satisfy the second language requirement at time of application.

PAS continued to meet the demand for Garda Trainees for An Garda Síochána and to meet Government commitments in terms of planned increased intakes into the Templemore Garda Training College. 198 successful candidates were forwarded to An Garda Síochána in 2020 following interviews undertaken in late 2019/early 2020. A new model for the recruitment of Garda Trainees was also developed in 2020.

A considerable amount of work has been done in preparation for the Garda internal promotion competitions, and the Sergeant promotion competition is expected to be advertised once the required Department of Justice regulations have been signed. The Inspector promotion competition will be advertised as soon as possible thereafter.

Medical Consultant Recruitment

PAS, in conjunction with the HSE, continued to support the recruitment of permanent Medical Consultants into the Irish Public Health Service. PAS carries out the recruitment for a number of Medical

Consultants while some posts are filled directly by the HSE. Even with the disruption of the pandemic 119 posts were advertised in 2020 (94 Acute and 25 Psychiatry), an increase of 13% on 2019 and 89 candidates (69 Acute and 20 Psychiatry) were recommended for appointment to the HSE.

2021 will see new challenges for PAS, in relation to Medical Consultant recruitment with the announcement by the HSE of a significant increase in new Medical Consultant posts and the introduction of Slainte Care. PAS however will continue to strive to recruit the best Medical Consultants for the Public Health Service in Ireland and do so in the most efficient and effective manner.

Local Government Recruitment

In 2020, PAS continued its role in recruiting for a diverse range of senior professional roles across the 31 Local Authorities. 37 recruitment campaigns were advertised in 2020 with 113 candidates recommended over the course of the year. In 2020 a focus was placed on increasing efficiencies and reducing timelines for Local Government recruitment competitions. This work was especially reflected in the running of a new nationwide Senior Executive Officer competition which was advertised in July 2020 and a panel for all 31 Local Authorities was in place 15 weeks later. This was a significant reduction in timelines from the previous competition. The use of new recruitment tools such as video interviewing continued to be rolled out and again has reduced considerably the time taken to complete certain competitions, particularly for Director of Service level, on average from 12 weeks down to six to seven weeks.

Innovation

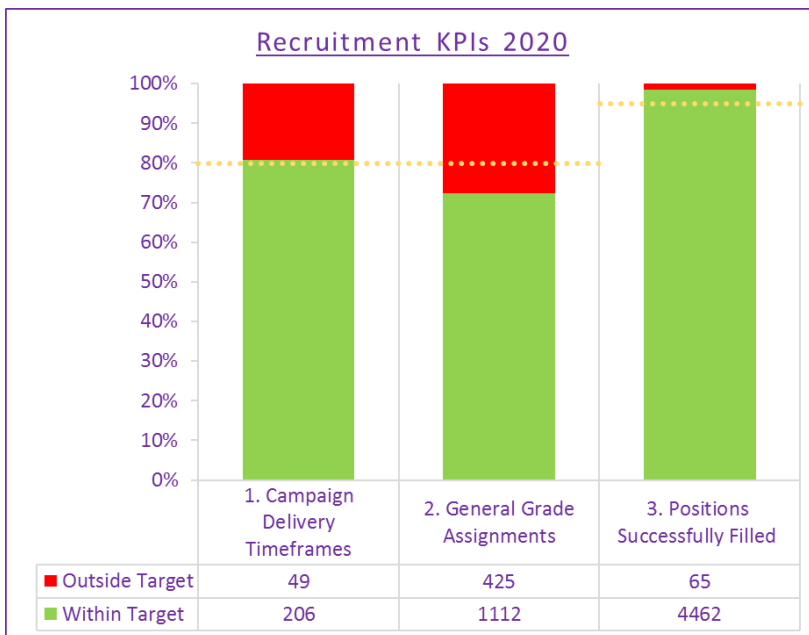
PAS established an Innovation Lab to understand what innovations staff would like to bring forward into 2021 and to provide structures for staff participation in innovative projects. PAS collected the lessons learned from its experience in responding to Covid-19 and was asked to share them with the Public Service Innovation Network and with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

PAS marked the Public Service Innovation Week 2020 with the launch of the new strategy, NUA23. PAS celebrated the hard work of PAS staff over a difficult year and asked for their input on what PAS should prioritise in 2021. Their feedback has now been incorporated into the 2021 business plans for the organisation. The CEO was asked to talk about PAS' innovation journey in 2020 at the keynote event of Innovation Week 2020 to hundreds of public servants. PAS was recognised for Digital Delivery of Service -

Excellence in the delivery of citizen-centric digital services as part of the 2020 Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Recognition Event. PAS received the award based on its ability to digitise its operating model in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, continuing to deliver services and uphold standards of recruitment excellence in a remote environment.

Recruitment Delivery Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

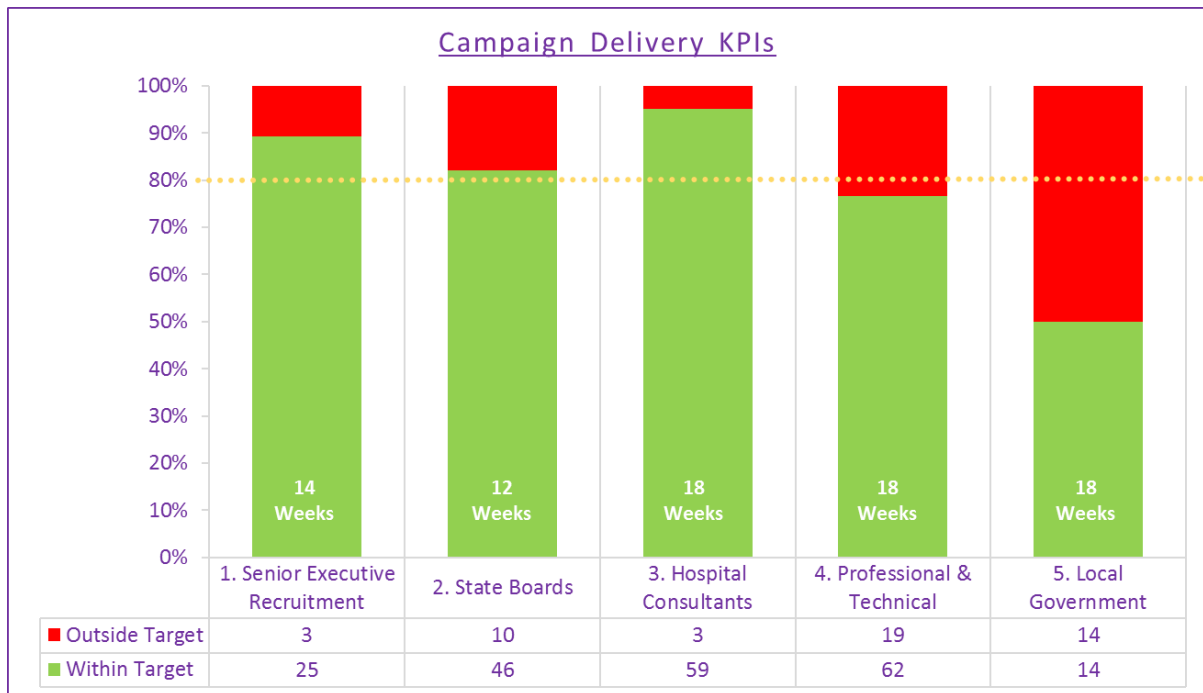
The tables below report on PAS KPIs for 2020:



1. Target: 80% of campaigns delivered within timeframe agreed with client

2. Target: 80% of assignments from General Grade Panels made within 10 weeks of request from client

3. Target: 95% of all positions successfully filled



1. Target: 80% of SER campaigns delivered within 14 weeks
2. Target: 80% of State Boards campaigns delivered within 12 weeks
3. Target: 80% of Hospital Consultants campaigns delivered within 18 weeks
4. Target: 80% of P&T campaigns delivered within 18 weeks
5. Target: 80% of Local Government campaigns delivered within 18 weeks.

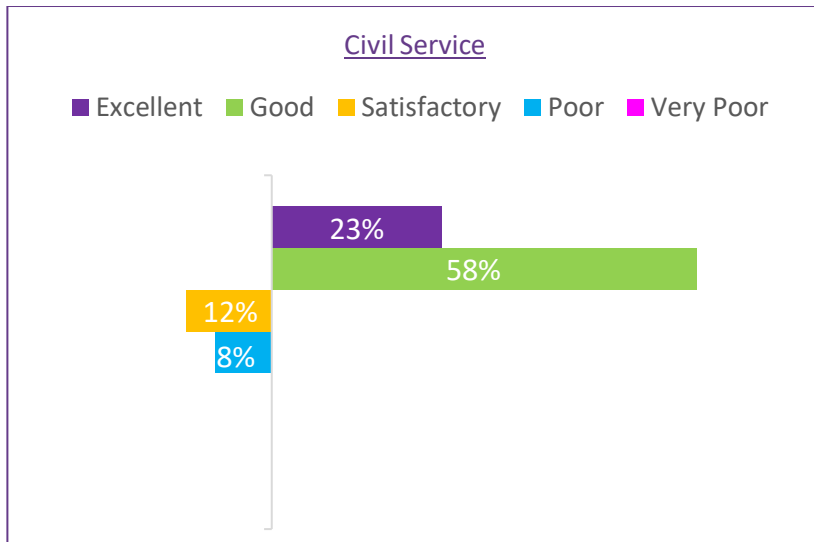
Two significant factors contributed to the extension of some competitions beyond the agreed number of weeks, firstly client hesitation initially at progressing with competitions virtually, and the significant increase in candidate applications, up to 30% additional applications for a variety of competitions. These factors had a significant impact on Local Authority recruitment delivery and for some very specialist Professional and Technical campaigns, as clients in these sector were more hesitant about remote interviewing initially, but gradually came on board in 2020.

Client Engagement

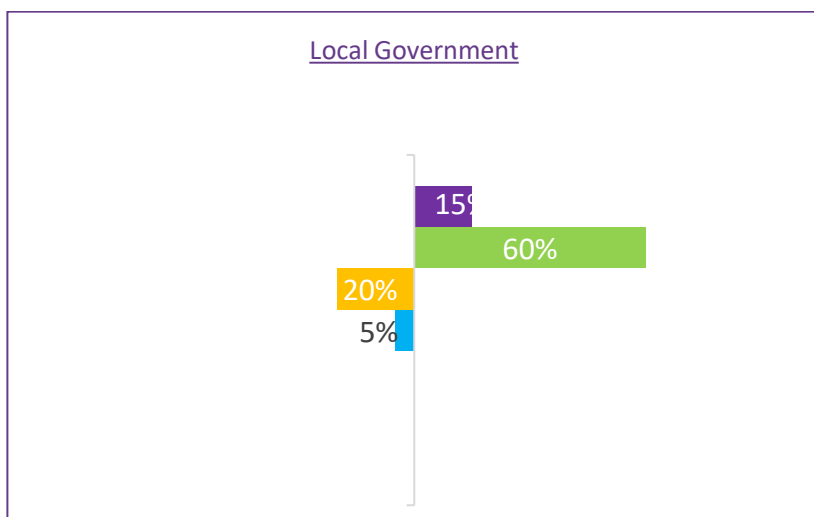
In order to measure PAS performance and identify areas for improvement, it is important that the organisation actively engages, listens and responds to feedback from clients. PAS issued a client survey for 2020, to elicit feedback on their level of satisfaction with PAS, across a number of different areas of engagement. This feedback loop is critical to ensuring that PAS can continually develop its service to meet client needs. The qualitative and quantitative data obtained will be analysed thoroughly in early 2021, and actions agreed to address the emerging issues. An overview of the survey results is set out below. In 2021,

PAS intends to issue client surveys on a more regular basis – these will be on a particular theme, and will be used for specific competitions.

Client Feedback Surveys

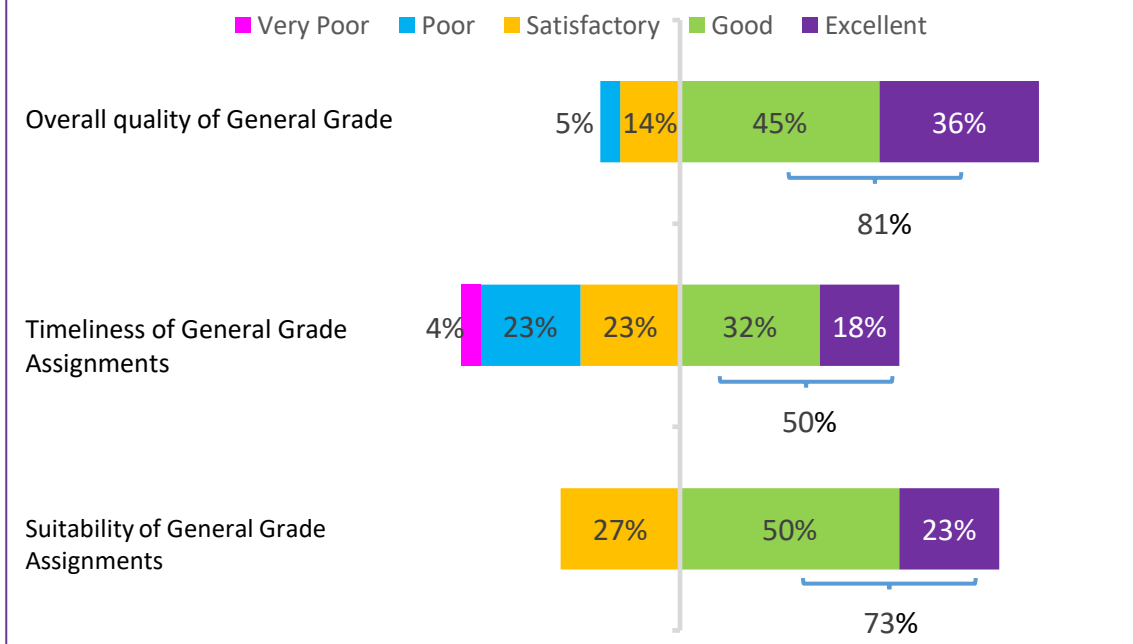


- 22 of 51 Civil Service Clients responded to the survey (**43%**)
- Over the last 12 months, these respondents accounted for **42%** of General Grade Assignments and **32%** of Professional & Technical Assignments to the Civil Service

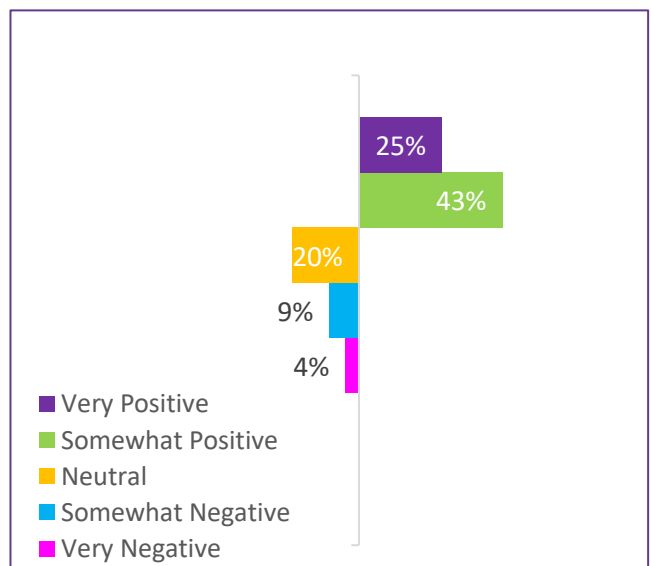
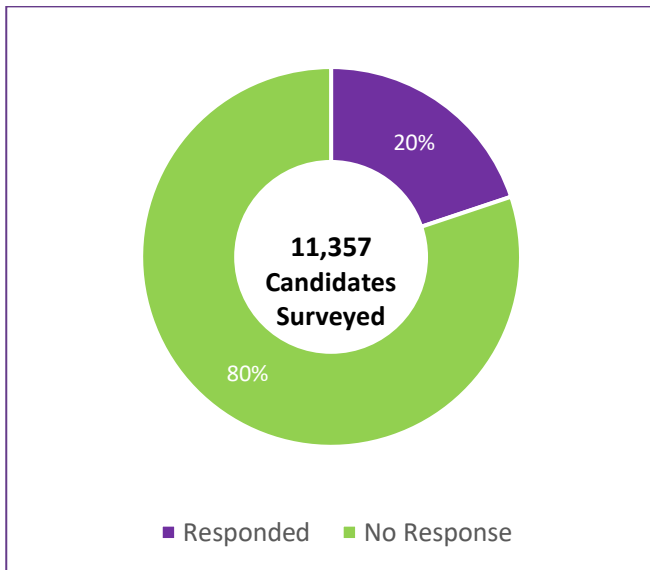


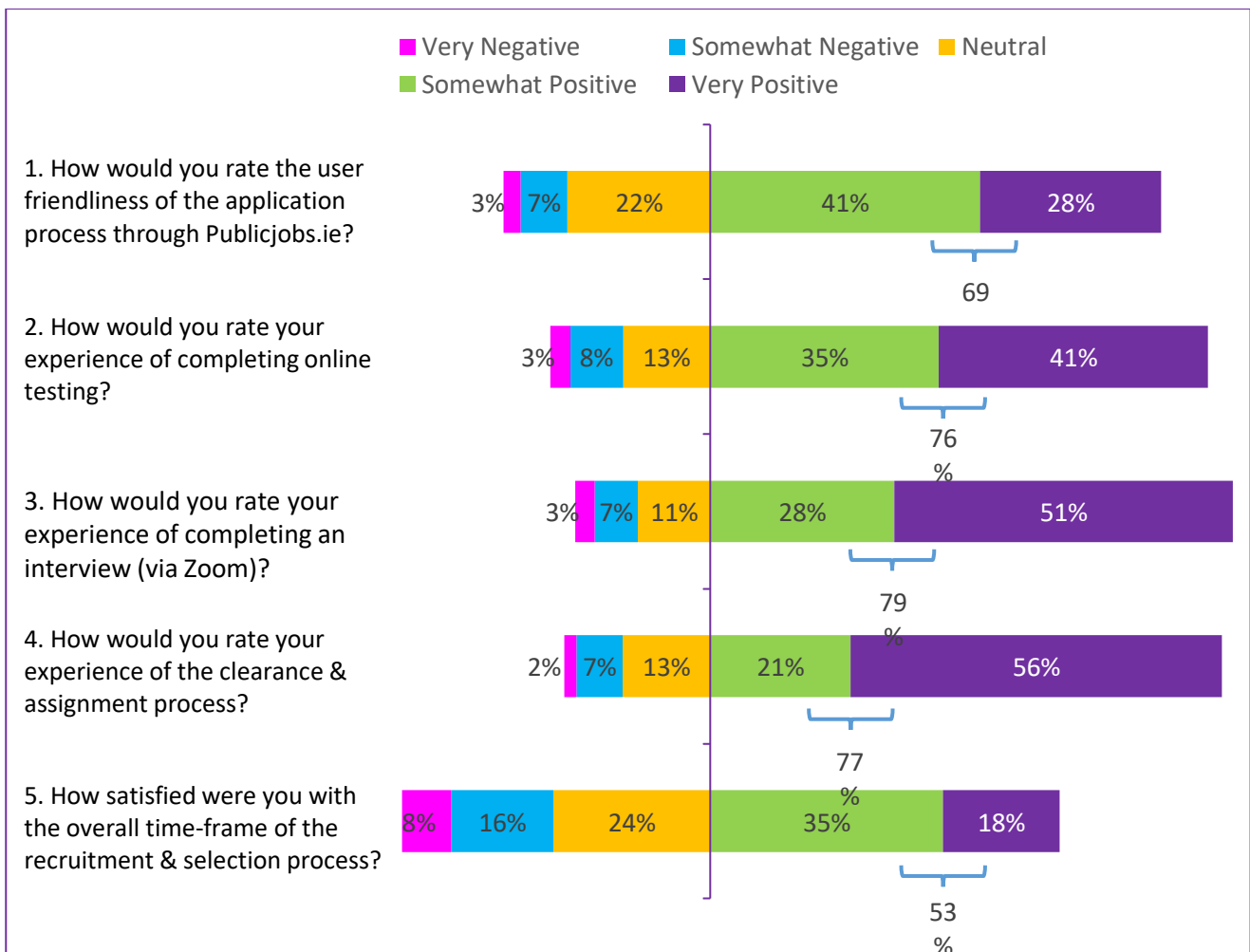
- 22 of 33 Local Authority Clients responded to the survey (**67%**)
- Over the last 12 months, these respondents accounted for **46%** of Local Authority Assignments

General Grade Recruitment Service Delivery for the Civil Service



Candidate Feedback Surveys





The Management Board are using the results of these surveys to focus on areas for improvement in 2021, including the timelines for delivery.

Market Positioning

Marketing and Communications Overview

PAS aims to develop stronger public recognition of the organisation so as to attract more diverse and high-quality applicant pools. PAS is developing its capacity to reach the widest audience for the variety of roles it has on offer through effective brand management and positioning. The challenge is to attract talented individuals while ensuring that the pool of available candidates is representative of the diversity of Irish society. Proactively reaching out to potential candidates requires utilising a wide range of marketing and communications channels, networks and digital media whilst optimising the opportunities

available through the adoption of leading-edge technologies. The key areas delivered in 2020 are set out below.

Professionalisation of the Marketing and Communications Unit

In March 2020, a new Head of Marketing and Communications was appointed to help deliver marketing and communications for PAS. There has also been a significant drive in learning and development within the unit to support the objective of developing strong public recognition of the organisation whilst attracting more diverse and high quality applicant pools.

Market Positioning of PAS

In 2020, PAS initiated a review of its marketing position and brand (including sub-brands). The research and discovery phase of this project will conclude in quarter 1 2021. The project will take into consideration perceptions of the organisation, understanding key brand barriers and drivers, and in turn defining a brand and marketing direction going forward.

Recruitment Advertising and Digital First Approach

Covid-19 brought rapid unemployment, rapid change and a requirement for rapid futureproofing. PAS quickly reacted by assessing how it performed its marketing activity, identifying where it needed to adapt to ensure it could continue to reach the market place and communicate effectively across the stakeholder network. PAS performed an evaluation of the marketplace, utilising expertise to drive informed decision making. It was clear that taking a digital first approach was required, utilising digital channels to continue engagement with the market place and stakeholders. This new direction allowed PAS reach large audiences in a highly targeted way, as well as allowing measurement and a real time and always on approach to marketing and communications activity.

The organisation took a two-pronged approach to activity to blend brand awareness and role specific advertising going forward to drive awareness and engagement with active and passive candidates with publicjobs.ie and its associated social channels.

- 2.8 million total visitors to publicjobs.ie in 2020
- 24% increase in publicjobs.ie page views in 2020 v 2019

- Social pages growth detailed below:

Platform	2018	2019	2020	% Growth	
				2018-19	2019-20
Facebook	51,704	57,984	68,603	12.1%	18.3%
Twitter	6,104	7,216	9,650	18.2%	33.7%
Linked In	19,686	34,031	74,550	64%	119%
Instagram	-	1,697	5,463	-	221.9%

For large volume campaigns, namely Executive Officer and Graduate Opportunities for 2020, PAS developed new campaign concepts and designs to simplify and modernise each campaign. PAS focused on representing real voices and faces from across the Public and Civil Service, striving to represent equality, diversity and inclusion across campaign messaging to expand the reach and awareness of these campaign with key target groups.

Graduate Opportunities 2020:

For the Grad Ireland Awards 2020, the Public Appointments Service were Finalists in the categories of Diversity and Inclusion, and Specialist Grad Development Programme, securing a podium finish for the IR/ER Graduate Development Programme, which opened again for applications in 2020/2021.

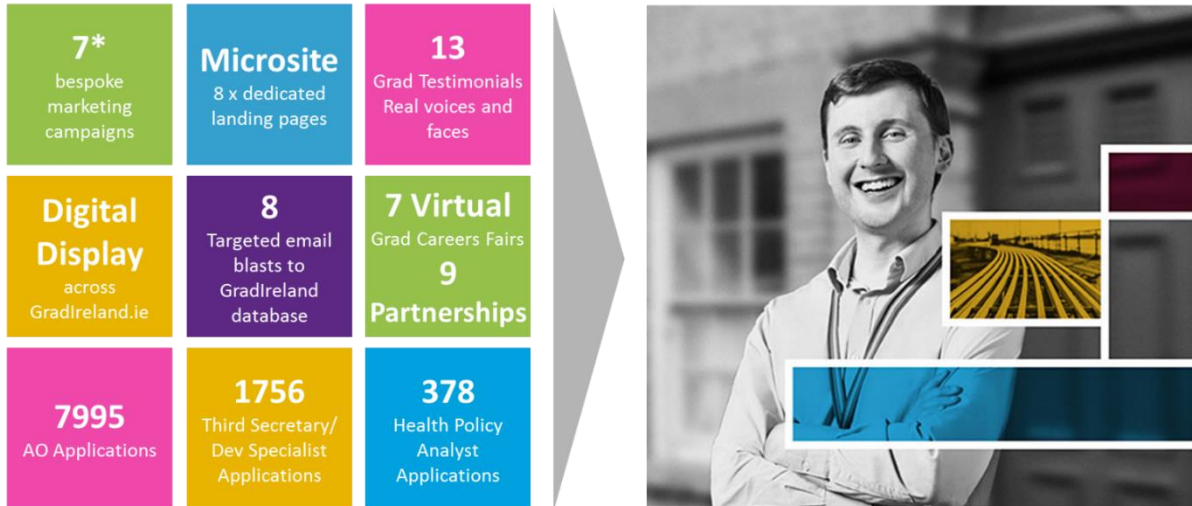


Example ad placement across social media channels inviting applications for the Graduate Opportunities Administrative Officer stream for Business and Finance:

There was a significant move towards virtual events as part of the 2020 Graduate campaign, to replace in person events as a result of Covid-19. PAS partnered on seven virtual events with key partners across Grad Ireland and Irish Universities to drive awareness and engagement. PAS took a collaborative approach to each event with members of

marketing and recruitment teams on hand to answer attendee queries, as well as sessions with existing graduates currently working across the Civil and Public Service.

Topline statistics in relation to graduate campaign 2020



* Business and Finance, Health Policy Analysts, HR, Generalist, Economists and Policy Analysts, Industrial and Employee Relations, Third Secretary and Development Specialists

Public Service Reform Innovation Fund

As part of the Public Service Innovation Fund PAS was awarded support for a project targeting second level school students to raise awareness about the Public sector. The objective of the project is to inspire students across 720+ secondary schools in Ireland to better understand the Civil and Public Service, the variety of options available and spark their interest in finding out more information. As a result of Covid-19, it has been necessary to adapt the original approach to provide a solution that would best deliver on the key objectives of the project.

PAS has developed an innovative, engaging and activity based digital product that taps into 21st Century skills and peer to peer engagement to be inclusive of all schools at Transition Year (TY) level. This will be done through the design of a dedicated microsite on publicjobs.ie and short, snappy videos to challenge existing preconceptions around the Public and Civil Service. This content will be integrated into bespoke lesson plans for TY students which will be delivered by teachers. The purpose of these lessons is to drive discussion around key areas of the Public service, utilising a range of online tools and formats, whilst educating the students and raising their awareness levels over a number of weeks. At the end of the learning period, students are then invited to take part in a nationwide advertising challenge to put their

learning into practice through creating their own video about the Civil and Public Service targeted to their peers. Prize incentives and the coveted 'winner' title is up for grabs, with the best videos being highlight across publicjobs.ie social channels. There has been extensive collaboration from a number of stakeholders across the education and Civil and Public sector to date, with further opportunities for 2021 including involvement in videos, profiling organisations, judging panels and more.

International Women's Day 2020

PAS sponsored the International Women's Day event on Tuesday 3rd March 2020 in partnership with the Civil Service Women's Network (CSWN). The CSWN committee is made up of women from all grades, backgrounds, and departments across the Civil Service. The challenge was to create an event to mark 100 Years of Women in the Civil Service for International Women's Day. The event took place in Dublin Castle and was attended by over 300 delegates with an impressive list of speakers and a panel sessions, discussing the roles of women in the Civil Service.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Human Rights and Equality Act Public Sector Duty

The Public Appointments Service conducted an assessment of human rights and equality issues relevant to its role and is satisfied that it is fulfilling its public sector duty obligation as set out in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. To further embed and promote human rights and equality principles the organisation took a number of actions in 2020, including the embedding of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion function and the approval of the first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The adaption of PAS to the changed recruitment landscape, prompted a review of the planned Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy, in the context of the corporate strategy Nua, which confirmed that the strategic change areas identified remained as salient as originally envisaged, and congruent with the changed environment. With Nua launched in the latter part of the year, the subsequent ED&I strategy roll-out is planned for quarter one 2021. Reinforcing this commitment, ED&I has been designated a key organisational strategic project, and its implementation will be governed and guided by

a Project Board, comprising key senior internal stakeholders and an external Chair. The appointment of a Chair with significant ED&I experience and expertise will ensure that PAS maintains its ambition over the course of our strategy. This also retains the approach, and builds on the experience of, the strategy development process, where external perspectives and input from the Advisory Board helped shape thinking.

Reasonable Accommodations Project

A key priority for PAS in 2020 included an examination of the provision of reasonable accommodation for candidates with disabilities during the recruitment process. This involved facilitated cross-functional workshops examining various stages of the candidate journey, from application to assignment and beyond. There was also a client workshop which enabled the sharing of their views and experience as employers and fostered an initial conversation as to how best PAS can support them. This change to a more discursive approach proved beneficial in that it facilitated a richer qualitative input, deeper reflection and increased ownership. The workshops gave rise to a number of identified actions and recommendations, which are being compiled into a roadmap for implementation that will be integrated into each units' business plans.

Developing ED&I Related Capability

There has been increased focus on data in recent times, and this is reflected not only in the corporate and ED&I strategies, but also in actions arising out of public sector wide initiatives such as Our Public Service 2020 and the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. PAS established a Data Working Group to formalise exploration into optimising mechanisms to systematically collect and analyse ED&I data, share learnings and enhance messaging around data collection. Preliminary engagements with the Central Statistics Office and ESRI have bolstered the ambition to employ external expertise to assist in developing a shared organisational understanding of the potential of these data sets to serve as an evidence base for organisational processes and engagement and the benefits that can be derived from systemised data collection.

Building on work to date in developing staff capacity and capability was also a priority this year. In response to the change in recruitment processes engendered by Covid-19, PAS devised training material on conducting accessible meetings/interviews in a remote setting, and delivered this via online sessions

to staff. PAS also developed an equality screening tool to ensure an ED&I lens on organisational decision making.

Policy Engagement and Outreach

Attracting diverse candidates is a major element of the PAS strategy and underpins its approach to policy engagement and outreach. To this end, PAS worked with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to revise the citizenship eligibility criteria for general service grade recruitment. This expansion of eligibility opens entry into the civil service to those who have international protection status or are the non-EEA spouse or child of an EEA citizen, and provides a foundation for further examination of policy and rights to labour market access in a public service recruitment context.

PAS also continued its outreach programme to engage with representative organisations (Open Doors Initiative, Exchange House, etc.) to help ensure awareness and knowledge of public sector employment opportunities among target groups. In particular, participating on St. Stephens Green Trust (SSGT) Traveller Programme and Enterprise Policy Programme (TEEPP) Advisory Group provided reciprocal benefits, in enhancing the understanding in PAS of barriers to employment for the Traveller community, while affording an avenue to work with other relevant stakeholders to develop opportunities to increase access to employment. Additionally, in recognition of the importance of visibly supporting and promoting public service careers for the Traveller community, PAS sponsored the Traveller Education awards for the first time. PAS aims to develop this as a long-term partnership which will facilitate increased engagement with the Traveller community.

PAS was delighted to receive a Willing, Able, Mentoring (WAM) Leaders award, in recognition of its continuing support of its graduate programme. In line with the aim of facilitating diverse access routes to employment, PAS initiated discussion with AHEAD and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on developing routes to permanency for WAM graduates, and presented proposals for same to fora such as the Corporate Assistant Secretary Group and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group. The submission paper was universally positively received, and work is continuing to engage with other key stakeholders in this space, with the intention to design and finalise this process for implementation with the 2022 graduate intake.

The Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Guide to Inclusive Employment, developed in conjunction with the Houses of the Oireachtas, was published on publicjobs.ie in 2020. This Guide is a valuable tool in promoting inclusive workplaces and best practice, encouraging other civil service departments and public service bodies to become OWL employers. PAS is also continuing to expand its capability as an inclusive employer, learning from our experience of OWL and supporting the graduates in a remote setting.

For the second year in a row the International Labour Organisation, a UN Organisation based in Geneva, invited PAS to participate in their International Conference. The theme of the 2020 conference was: Leading by example – employment of people with disabilities during the pandemic. Through participating on a panel discussion this provided a platform on which to share this learning, along with enhancements to PAS processes for applicants with disabilities, introduced as part of our Covid-19 response. It is also supporting moves towards creating a very useful public service employers network on issues related to employment of people with disabilities.

Developing our People, Organisation and Culture

Organisation Design & Development
Digital Transformation
Transforming our work spaces

Organisation Design and Development

PAS has always been a very connected organisation with a strong culture of collaboration and community. The pandemic transformed how PAS worked overnight so it was important to retain a strong sense of engagement and connection between people and the organisation as the situation evolved. Throughout the pandemic, PAS has prioritised the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce by providing diverse opportunities for employees to engage and connect and by equipping the workforce with the necessary tools to be productive and achieve a healthy work life balance.

The PAS Response – Key Principles

The key principles underpinning the organisation response from a people and culture perspective have been to:

- Protect the health and safety of the workforce
- Promote employee engagement and wellbeing
- Support staff learning and development
- Implement Government and HSA guidelines
- Embed new processes and ways of working underpinned by PAS values.

Mobilising the Workforce

From the onset of Covid-19, leadership in PAS reinforced the message that PAS staff and the organisation played a key role in supporting the Government's response to the pandemic. This created a shared sense of purpose across the organisation and empowered individuals and teams to work collaboratively in new ways. Remote access for all staff was prioritised and resources were mobilised around key priorities to ensure optimal levels of employee engagement and productivity. Flexible working was promoted by

senior management, which shifted the focus for line managers from ‘time in work’ to ‘tasks and outputs’ and also supported staff to achieve a healthy work-life balance under challenging circumstances.

Communication, Connection and Collaboration

The early adoption of video technology allowed leaders to connect quickly with people across the organisation, supported teams to deliver services remotely and encouraged staff to stay connected with each other.

PAS launched a new intranet (the eHub), and published a weekly newsletter (What’s NUA?) and designed staff communications to ensure they were practical and accessible to all. The CEO delivered bi-weekly town-halls via Zoom providing updates in relation to business activities and information on learning opportunities, wellbeing supports and social events for all staff.

Regular staff surveys (April, June, and September) enabled the organisation to better understand the experiences of staff working from home and to design interventions that support them to be well at work. These new digital communication channels have been fundamental in keeping staff informed, connected and engaged during the pandemic while also providing key insights into the employee experience of working remotely.

A key feature of the PAS response has been a strong commitment to cross-organisational collaboration, designing solutions in partnership with staff across the organisation. This approach has facilitated high levels of engagement, creativity and innovation and has allowed PAS to meet the needs of customers and adapt as the situation has evolved. Examples of cross-functional structures in PAS include the NUA23 Strategy group, the Transition team supporting the roll-out of the building project, the IT Steering Group, the Business Champions network supporting the integration of new technology including Office 365, the PAS Innovation Lab, and the Future of Work group who are reimagining how the organisation will work into the future. The Covid-19 response team have also been working closely with PAS lead worker representatives and partnership committee to facilitate ongoing dialogue and consultation in relation to the Covid-19 protocols.

Learning and Development

The early adoption of video technology also enabled PAS to quickly pivot to a virtual learning model in 2020. This has enhanced employee engagement in Learning and Development (L&D) activities throughout the year with a focus on developing key skills for operating remotely and delivering services in new ways. PAS staff surveys along with feedback via the performance management system have provided valuable insights into the developmental needs of individuals and teams across the organisation and this ongoing engagement has allowed the L&D team to iterate the offering based on user demands and organisational priorities. PAS staff now have the opportunity to engage virtually in short development programmes, 3rd level qualifications, bite-size courses and a diverse range of workshops procured by the PAS L&D partner.

In the context of designing relevant and targeted L&D interventions, the PAS L&D business partner proactively engaged with line managers across the organisation to understand their business needs and design L&D activities that support them to deliver on the objectives. A key feature of the partnering approach is to draw on internal expertise in the design and delivery of content and to develop organisational capability in this regard. In 2020, the L&D partner worked closely with stakeholders across PAS to co-design a range of masterclasses delivered by PAS staff to PAS staff. This approach has empowered individuals and teams to share their expertise and build organisational capability from the inside out. Some examples of internal content development in 2020 include:

- Assessment Services Unit - Training modules on Unconscious Bias and Video Interviewing; “Upskill with ASU” sessions were also held on topics such as developing Video Interviews and Quality Assurance of Boards.
- Data Protection Officer – Data Protection 101 webinar series
- IT – Conducting effective Zoom meetings
- People & Culture – Performance Management and Probation Management training sessions.

Health and Wellbeing

The PAS ‘Staying Well and Connected’ programme has been fundamental to supporting and connecting our people both personally and professionally during the pandemic. Levels of engagement have been consistently high and the programme continues to evolve in response to the changing needs of the

workforce. The programme has also enhanced organisational capability in the effective management of wellbeing to embed a holistic wellbeing culture that supports high performance and enables PAS to meet the needs of customers. Aligned to interventions that support the emotional and mental wellbeing of staff while working from home, a key focus for PAS has been to support the physical wellbeing of the workforce. The suite of ergonomic supports has ensured that staff are equipped to operate effectively and productively in a homeworking environment that is both safe and comfortable.

To combat professional isolation and social exclusion challenges arising from remote working, the PAS wellbeing programme has incorporated a range of opportunities for social engagement which have afforded staff the opportunity to switch off and connect with colleagues on an informal basis. The positive impact on engagement levels, as a result of the Staying Well and Connected programme, is reflected in the most recent staff survey, with 89% of staff agreeing that they generally feel well while working from home, and 90% agreeing that they feel their health and wellbeing is supported by the organisation.

Engaging Employees into the Future

PAS staff have demonstrated phenomenal commitment and dedication in supporting the PAS response to the Covid-19 pandemic. A response rate of 94% to the 2020 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey reflects a culture of engagement and connection that is part of the organisational DNA.

Going forward, protecting the health and safety of the workforce will continue to be the top priority as the organisation's plans for a return to the workplace and a new world of work. The boundaries between being physically in and out of the office are collapsing and PAS has a significant opportunity to reimagine the workplace and workspace. PAS staff are central to shaping the future and together it is hoped to create a safe environment where everyone can enjoy their work, collaborate with colleagues, achieve a healthy work life balance and deliver on the objectives set out in NUA23.

PAS Values

In 2020, managers across the organisation engaged with their teams in a values exercise. During team meetings, employees discussed the attitudes and behaviors associated with each value and how PAS

values had been tested and demonstrated during the Covid-19 crisis. This has brought the values to life and enabled the organisation to recognise and acknowledge where values had been demonstrated and also how PAS can learn from shared experiences.

Excellence Through People Assessment

The National Standards Authority of Ireland conducted an audit of PAS people practices in October 2020, as part of the Excellence through People (ETP) certification process which seeks to validate people processes to ensure they deliver value for organisations. The ETP assessor met with the management board and interviewed staff from across the organisation gaining insights into the employee experience in PAS. A comprehensive review of PAS policies and processes was also conducted and PAS successfully retained ETP certification for 2020/21. The auditor was very positive and complimentary of the interventions rolled out by PAS in response to Covid-19 and was particularly impressed by the approach to supporting the wellbeing of our staff. The feedback from the staff interviews was also very positive with an overriding sense of appreciation for the approach taken by PAS to support their wellbeing during the pandemic. The assessor noted that *'it is clear that wellbeing is treated as an organisational priority in PAS'*. Some areas for development were in relation to utilising staff surveys to understand the level of 1-1 communication that is taking place between manager's and staff across the organisation and to develop a more comprehensive framework around the evaluation of learning and development activities with a focus on understanding changes in attitudes and behaviours as a result of training interventions at all levels.

Supporting Selection Board Members

2020 was a challenging year for selection board members and for those PAS Representatives serving on selection boards as PAS suddenly moved from physical face-to-face interviews, to remote interviewing for all stages of the selection process. This presented particular challenges for the selection board members, as well as the Recruitment Units dealing directly with them. A new Selection Board Member Unit was established in PAS in March to, inter alia, centralise on-boarding of and training of new selection board members. Much of the focus during the year was on ensuring that the current cohort of selection board members were fully trained and prepared for the new manner of working and interviewing and that they were supported as much as possible throughout the process. The new way of working does place additional demands on those involved and, to reflect this, PAS has sought a review of the rates of

payment for selection board members, particularly at the lower levels, which is currently under consideration by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

During the latter part of the year, PAS renewed its focus on further developing its cohort of selection board members to represent a wider spread of backgrounds and experience and these potential new Selection board members completed their on-line training in 2020 with a view to focussed workshops being held in early 2021. In early 2021, PAS will attempt to identify groups/networks which PAS can reach out to with a view to further enhance its board membership to ensure that it is more reflective of Irish Society as a whole. A review of the payment structure above may also assist in attracting persons from across Society to participate on such selection boards.

Digital Transformation

Remote Working

Prior to the pandemic, PAS had limited capability and capacity to facilitate remote working, and it was primarily required by IT support staff and some members of the senior management team. However, within a very short period, all staff were given remote access to the network, and were able to securely access all the network resources to carry out their day-to-day work.

Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing was identified very early on as a vital tool in ensuring PAS could continue to operate effectively during the pandemic. PAS required a platform that could be deployed rapidly, was scalable, secure, easy to use and to manage, and did not require any on-premise infrastructure and an emerging platform called Zoom was identified as the best fit for PAS purposes. The platform was vital in ensuring that PAS could operate effectively throughout 2020; it was used extensively as the primary means of keeping in touch with staff, to deliver training and wellbeing sessions and became firmly embedded in the recruitment process as the year progressed.

Office 365

Enabling a workplace culture that embodies innovation, through a digital 1st approach is one of the key pillars of the PAS Statement of Strategy 2020-2023. Phase one of the Office 365 project was completed in December 2020, with corporate email moved to the Cloud. The introduction of Microsoft Teams has enhanced organisational communication and collaboration capabilities. Following the roll out, 84% of staff agreed that the introduction of Microsoft Teams has made a positive impact on how they communicate/schedule meetings with colleagues.

The establishment of an Office 365 Business Champions program was a vital part of the project, helping to drive adoption of the new tools and raise awareness throughout the organisation of the capabilities of the new system. Phase two of the project is due to run throughout 2021 and will see PAS migrate data files to the platform and deploy other applications available as part of the Office 365 suite of tools.

Infrastructure and Cyber Security

The maintenance and security of the network infrastructure remained a key priority for PAS throughout 2020. A vulnerability assessment of the office network was carried out by an external IT security company early in the year. The output of that assessment outlined several recommendations where improvements could be made; all of these were all acted on. PAS also replaced some of firewall infrastructure in 2020, as part of a program of rolling upgrades.

In terms of cyber security, the challenge of managing and securing corporate laptops that were not directly connected to the office network was a significant one. To that end, PAS introduced new endpoint protection software for all laptops in 2020. This software mitigated some of the major risks associated with the new ways of working. The IT function can now deploy the same web filtering policies applied to network pcs, there is increased anti-virus protection for all laptops not directly connected to the network and a sandboxing tool opens all email attachments in the Cloud, examines that attachment for malware, before notifying users of the results. Two factor authentication is standard for accessing the corporate network through both Citrix and VPN connections, adding an additional layer of security.

Continuous maintenance and enhancement of our core applicant tracking system

Throughout 2020, fixes, enhancements and new features were developed and deployed to our bespoke applicant tracking system. These included a significant project to redesign and develop a new web application form that aims to replace the PDF application form within the PAS legacy system and is being rolled out throughout 2021. This new form will improve the candidate experience through greater mobile compatibility and accessibility while providing the recruitment units with greater flexibility in setting candidate's application form questions. Significant analysis and development work was also undertaken to redesign how the applicant tracking software manages panels of candidates, improving the user experience and reporting capabilities.

Continuous maintenance and enhancement of our public facing websites and digital platforms

Throughout 2020 PAS developed a number of bespoke webpages and micro sites to support a range of recruitment competitions and other PAS projects and initiatives. A digital accessibility audit was also undertaken that uncovered a number of areas for potential improvement on our platforms which resulted in a multi phased remediation project to address these issues.

Utilised innovative new platforms and development techniques to respond to the rapidly changing digital requirements that Covid-19 presented

To support specific business needs presented by Covid-19, PAS analysed a number of options aimed at increasing its ability to quickly prototype and deliver digital solutions to support rapidly evolving recruitment requirements. To support potential mass redeployment across the civil service due to Covid-19, a bespoke software system was developed to meet these unique requirements. The learnings from this new rapid application development platform has now uncovered new opportunities for PAS to further automate and increase efficiency in other processes which is an ongoing task throughout 2021.

NOVA (Benchmarking & Market engagement)

Project NOVA is the name of the project to find, buy, and implement a new recruitment system. PAS has been actively engaging with other recruiters in Ireland and internationally, across both private and public sector recruitment, learning valuable insights about the best approach for delivery of a project of this

nature, about the digital solutions on the market, and good practice in recruitment service delivery. This exercise informed the procurement approach, with a *Request for Information* published in November.

Transforming our Workspaces

PAS has continued work on the Chapter House Upgrade Project and with the contract signed in December 2020, works should commence in early 2021.

Trusted Partner

Building our Recruitment and Advisory Service

Client Advisory Function

A core component of 'Nua' is the development of an evidence-based advisory service, which is reflected in the strategic priority of 'Becoming a Trusted Partner.' This advisory role for PAS is also set out in the Public Services Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act, 2004. PAS ambition is to provide evidence-based leadership and advisory support to clients that will support good practice and innovations in talent solutions and the development of workplace related public policy. This initiative is driven by a motivation to support clients across the public service to: achieve recruitment excellence, adapt to the changing workplace and help shape the future of a high performing and values-based Irish public service.

As recruitment professionals, PAS is cognisant of its unique position in the public service, and have defined the following high-level objectives for its advisory service:

- To equip the organisation to share knowledge and experience, to support client organisations to demonstrate good practice in recruitment and to deliver a diverse, highly talented and committed public sector workforce;
- To put in place a coherent, structured and valued suite of inclusive recruitment supports, and be recognised as a champion and thought leader in inclusive recruitment practices;
- To collate the latest research and new insights into public service recruitment trends and developments and disseminate this to client organisations, including policymakers;
- To inform policy development by preparing the public service for the future of work and in particular understanding how the changing workplace interfaces with the public sector employment profile.

Client Information Hub

In 2020, PAS launched a new **Client Information Hub**, which can be accessed via publicjobs.ie. The Hub was developed to support clients with their recruitment needs and will provide access to a range of resources that promote good practice in recruitment and selection. By sharing PAS expertise and unique learnings, through the provision of practical learning modules and resources, it is hoped to support clients with their recruitment needs.

As part of the PAS commitment to the ‘trusted advisor’ brief, PAS has developed a number of new and informative learning resources that are available on the Client Information Hub. The new resources include:

- **Interview Skills:** this video briefing includes guidance and support to clients in conducting fair, robust and high-quality interviews, in line with best practice.
- **Video Interview Skills:** this video briefing provides practical supports by leveraging our experience and providing useful tips for interviewers who are undertaking remote interviews.
- **Promoting Inclusive Employment:** based on shared learning with the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, PAS has developed an Inclusive Employment Guide as a useful resource for the public service. The Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme aims to provide trainees who have an intellectual disability with the skills, knowledge and ability to gain meaningful paid employment.

The range of resources will be built on incrementally, to reflect the needs of clients and best practice in recruitment and selection. This will be further determined and embedded as part of the roll-out of the Client Advisory function.

Client Communications

As part of the commitment to keeping clients informed, the Client Relations Management function has developed the following resources for clients:

- **Panel Management Report:** to assist clients with resource planning, a new ‘Panel Management Report’ has been developed and is issued to clients on a fortnightly basis. The format of the report is based on a traffic light system and provides an overview of the current panel availability

across general and professional grades (larger volume). Feedback has been extremely positive from clients.

- **Client Newsletter:** a new client newsletter has been developed and was launched to all clients (on a quarterly basis) in September. A separate newsletter has also been developed for Local Authority clients, which is tailored to their needs/areas of interest. The newsletter will share key organisational updates and achievements from across the organisation. The first edition had a focus on innovations and adaptations to the recruitment process which have facilitated business continuity during Covid-19 and also the work of the ED&I team across a number of different projects. It is intended that the section on 'Practical Advice & Tips' will be a regular feature of the newsletter going forward and is aligned with the 'trusted advisor' brief.

Client Account Manager Framework

The client account manager framework is a key feature of the PAS customer service / engagement with clients and is pivotal to building a strong relationship and knowledge of the client base. Due to a reconfiguration of Departments and staff changes in PAS, interest was sought from across the Management Team for new client account managers (who will be allocated to a specific client). As part of the wider supports, CRM established an internal network for client account managers to discuss any issues, promote/ ensure a consistency of approach and share feedback from clients.

Client Work Force Planning

PAS is engaging with clients to obtain details of their projected resourcing requirements. It is hoped that this information will provide key business intelligence to assist with internal planning in PAS in relation to the capacity of recruitment units and overall panel availability.

Temporary Assignment Scheme

When the possible implications of Covid started to become clear, a Temporary Assignment Scheme was established to allow staff from across the entire Public Service to be deployed to areas of greatest need. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform developed the policy for this scheme and PAS implemented it. There were two streams to this project: 1. Engaging with staff deemed releasable by their employer across the Public Service; and 2. Engaging with all Special Needs Assistants in the

Education Sector through the Department of Education and Skills. This involved identifying the skills and managerial levels required primarily by the HSE, developing a system to gather and host information from staff, identifying appropriate people to be assigned when requests came in and co-ordinating with the HSE to assign staff to various locations across the country. Ongoing communication was required between all parties. Through this scheme, the Irish Public Service was able to respond very quickly to the crises and place staff in the areas where they were most needed.

Governance

The Role of the Board of the Public Appointments Service and the Role of the CEO

The Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004 established the Public Appointments Service. It provides for a Chief Executive and the appointment of a Board. The structures put in place in the legislation provide for the Chief Executive to be the Accounting Officer of the Public Appointments Service and the designated Head of the Scheduled Office in accordance with the Public Service Management Act 1997. The Public Appointments Service is therefore a Civil Service body, and this impacts on the role and nature of the Board, which is advisory in nature, due to the robust legal responsibilities placed on the Chief Executive.

Accounting Officer Role

The Public Appointments Service is one of a small number of State Bodies that has a Statutory Accounting Officer (the Chief Executive) within the meaning of Section 22 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act, 1866, with responsibility for Voted funds. Therefore, the preparation of the Appropriation Accounts and associated public financial procedures are the responsibility of the Accounting Officer.

The Accounting Officer is personally answerable to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the legislature for the regularity and propriety of transactions in the accounts for which s/he is responsible, as well as for economy, efficiency and effectiveness and the stewardship of assets.

Role of Chief Executive as the Head of a Scheduled Office

The Chief Executive is designated the Head of the Scheduled Office under the Public Service Management Act 1997. As such the Chief Executive, rather than the Board, has the responsibilities set out in that legislation.

Functions of the Board

Reflecting the accountability relationship of the CEO to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform as set out above, the statutory functions of the Board are more advisory in nature than the traditional functions of State Boards and, essentially, relate to giving advice or guidance to the Chief Executive. The

specific functions are set out in section 36 of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointment) Act, 2004.

The current Board of the Public Appointments Service
<p>Chairman</p> <p>Mr Tom Moran, former Secretary General, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine</p> <p>Board Members</p> <p>Ms Shirley Comerford, Chief Executive, Public Appointments Service</p> <p>Mr Mary Hurley, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Housing, Planning and Local Government</p> <p>Dr Eddie Molloy, HR Consultant</p> <p>Ms Anne-Marie Taylor, Management Consultant</p> <p>Ms Mary Connaughton, Executive Director, CIPD</p> <p>Mr John O’Callaghan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Justice and Equality</p> <p>Ms Anne O’Connor, Chief Operations Officer, HSE</p> <p>Mr David Cagney, Chief Human Resources Officer for the Civil Service, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</p>

Board Meetings

Six board meetings were held in 2020 (on 5th February, 1st April, 10th June, 22nd September, 2nd November and 15th December).

Board Member	Number of meetings Board Member was eligible to attend	Number of meetings Board Member attended
Mr. Tom Moran (Chairperson)	6	5
Ms. Shirley Comerford (CEO)	6	6
Ms. Anne-Marie Taylor	6	6
Dr. Eddie Molloy	6	5
Mr. David Cagney	6	5

Ms. Mary Connaughton	6	6
Mr. John O'Callaghan	6	6
Ms. Anne O'Connor	6	4
Mr. Barry Quinlan	3	2
Ms. Mary Hurley	3	2

Management Board

The purpose of the Management Board is to ensure delivery of the organisation's strategy and to ensure that effective management structures, including corporate governance structures, are in place and are working effectively. The Management Board is responsible for assuring the Board of the Public Appointments Service on the effective use of all resources and, within the allocated resources, ensuring that organisation has the capability to deliver on its legislative remit.

The management team leads and manages the implementation of the systems, processes and behaviours necessary to promote good corporate governance across the organisation and which ensure that all staff work together as a high performing team. The Corporate Governance Framework for the Public Appointments Service is available on publicjobs.ie. Each individual member of the management team has a responsibility to show leadership, to contribute to the management of the organization as a whole and to actively support colleagues in meeting their objectives. Leadership and management set the tone for effective governance from the top while modelling good governance behaviours and demonstrating a commitment to achieving objectives through accountable processes.

<i>Members of the Management Board</i>	
<i>Name and Role</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Shirley Comerford, Chief Executive, Public Appointments Service	Responsibility for implementation of Board policy, strategy, management, and operation of the Public Appointments Service resides with the Corporate Executive, affected through the Chief Executive.
Catherine Dobbins, Head of Corporate Affairs	Responsible for corporate services, including HR, Finance, and Compliance and Quality Assurance (which incorporates Reviews under the CPSA Codes and all corporate governance functions).

Niall Leavy, Head of Market Engagement	Responsible for supporting the Management Board on a number of key strategic research and development projects, that assist the organisation to identify, and prepare for adopting, market-leading approaches to recruitment and assessment, and help ensure continuous delivery of excellent service to clients across the public sector.
Aoife Lyons, Head of Assessment Services	Putting effective, efficient, and best practice assessment measures in place to select the best possible candidates for our clients.
Margaret McCabe, Chief Operations Officer	Providing high-level support to the CEO, with responsibility for the overall operation of the Public Appointments Service in the delivery of effective and efficient services and achievement of our strategic objectives.
John Keegan, Head of Talent Acquisition for the Public Service	Responsible for driving best practices in recruitment and selection to identify high quality candidates for diverse roles across the Public Service. Ensuring consistently high standards of service delivery to enable a responsive recruitment model which takes into account the evolving requirements of clients and candidates in a competitive environment.
Sandra Cairns, Head of Talent Acquisition for the Civil Service	Responsible for driving best practices in recruitment and selection to identify high quality candidates for diverse roles across the Civil Service. Ensuring consistently high standards of service delivery to enable a responsive recruitment model which takes into account the evolving requirements of clients and candidates in a competitive environment.
Michelle Noone, Head of Senior and Executive Recruitment	Using executive search methodologies to identify high quality candidates for Senior Executive & Board level appointments. Responsible for the provision of an open, efficient, and effective gateway and process to identify top quality people for consideration by Ministers for appointment to State Boards.
Rosemarie O'Mahony, Head of Digital Transformation, Strategy and Innovation	Overseeing strategy execution so that the Public Appointments Service delivers on our mission and vision and is positioned to respond to challenges and effectively harness opportunities to enhance our services. Overseeing the delivery of the organisation's Digital Transformation Programme to future-proof our IT solutions and services, improve organisational performance, and position the Public Appointments Service as a leader in digital recruitment.

Roisin Walsh, Head of People and Culture	Lead the development, implementation, and evaluation of people strategies that support the Public Appointments Service to achieve our vision, mission, and strategic goals.
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Organisation Structure

The Recruitment and Selection Services Unit (RSSU) carries out the core business functions. RSSU consists of eleven recruitment teams and two clearance and assignment teams, each headed up by a Recruitment Manager. Each team has a core responsibility, but the structure is flexible enough to focus resources where demand is greatest at any given time. A specialist team has responsibility for the State Boards process.

RSSU is assisted by the Office's key support units: Assessment Services, Executive Search, Marketing and Communications, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Information Technology, Finance, Client and Candidate Relations, Business Support and Facilities Management, Legal and Selection Board Member Unit, People and Culture, Compliance and Quality Assurance, Data Analytics, and Project Services.

The Audit Committee

The current members of the Audit Committee are:

Chairperson

Ms Clare McGrath, Former Chairman of the Office of Public Works

Members

Ms Anne-Marie Taylor, Management Consultant (Board Nominee)

Mr Tom Young, Former Director BNY Mellon

Ms Geraldine Kelly, Former Director Carbon Solutions, ESB International

The Audit Committee carries out functions in relation to the following areas:

- Internal Control
- Governance and Risk Management

- Internal Audit
- External Audit
- Financial Management
- Reporting Functions

The Committee met on four occasions during 2019, on 20th May, 25th June, 24th September, and 10th December.

The Committee continued to focus on developing its role in providing an enhanced level of support to the Accounting Officer in all aspects of the internal audit function. Four Audits, from the Strategic Audit Plan, were scheduled to be carried out in 2020, and one was carried over from 2019.

Five audits were presented to the Audit Committee during 2020.

The following five audit reports were carried out by the internal audit partners during 2020 and were presented to the Audit Committee:

- Equality and Diversity
- Risk Management
- Financial Reporting
- Asset Management
- Standardisation

Risk Management

A Risk Management Framework and Risk Management Policy has been developed which is appropriate to the office. An internal Risk Management Group oversees the implementation and monitoring of this process. The Group report to the Internal Audit Committee at each meeting and updates on current risks facing the organisation are given to the Audit Committee and the Board at each meeting. A key risk is discussed in detail at each meeting of the Audit Committee and the Board. The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed throughout 2020. It is discussed by the Management Board on a regular basis. The major risks facing the organisation at present are in the areas of business continuity; meeting organisational objectives/client demands; compliance with

Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation, and that the Schrems II Judgement will have a negative impact on a range of business activities. Considerable time and resources have been invested into mitigating these four key risks.

- **Risk that a major incident outside of PAS control (e.g. pandemic, fire, flood, prolonged power failure, external building works) will lead to a disruption of services and/or loss of critical data**

PAS has put all of the required structures and processes in place to respond to this risk area and to manage it on an ongoing basis, including business continuity and crisis management structures. In response to the current crisis, all staff have been set up to work remotely and business is being delivered remotely on an ongoing basis and constantly adapted to respond to evolving situations and feedback from all customer groups. PAS is also progressing strategic projects and priorities in addition to delivering the required services for clients and government.

- **Risk that PAS cannot meet all organisational objectives and client expectations**

Changes to interview and testing practices due to remote working require additional administrative support. This is partly due to support required pre and post interviews, but also the interview schedules are longer as fewer candidates can be interviewed each day, so each competition has a longer interview schedule and associated support requirements. PAS staff are also used a lot more as PAS Representative and Selection Board Members due to demands of remote selection.

The Resourcing Group, which is a sub-group of the Management Board reviews resources on an ongoing basis and identifies key roles that need to be filled through either internal mobility or other means. PAS also engages with clients when taking on additional work to agree funding for staff to assist with that work, and this will continue in 2021. PAS has also implemented a range of alternative recruitment models and recruitment processes and is constantly reviewing campaigns with a view to redesigning processes to reduce the level of resources required to deliver.

A framework has been put in place for increased engagement with clients about workforce planning and the provision of additional information to clients on panels in order to better understand client needs and assist in prioritising campaigns. There has been increased

communication of capability/timing with clients in advance of specific campaigns and throughout the process.

- **Risk that PAS will be found to be non-compliant with data protection and FOI legislation**

A range of documentation, incorporating obligations under the current Data Protection Legislation (General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act, 2018) were developed and published on the Publicjobs.ie website in May 2018. These documents have been revised on a six monthly basis and updates published on the website. The Data Protection Officer is in the second year of implementing a two-year data protection plan to further enhance the approach to data protection and information governance throughout PAS. A revised process for conducting Privacy Impact Risk Assessments is in place and is being used in advance of all new projects or the introduction of new ways of processing data. The DPO has designed, and rolled out, a range of specialist data protection training for PAS staff around all key areas of data protection. A network of Data Protection Liaison Officers (DPLO) has been put in place, and they will be specifically encouraged to attend the ongoing training sessions. Staff also undertook external training on protecting data while working remotely.

- **Risk that the Schrems II Judgement will have a negative impact on a range of business activities and the use of external providers of a range of key services**

Compliance with the judgement is being specifically considered by the DPO as advice is sought regarding potential new data processors or suppliers, and assistance is provided by the DPO to ensure our procedures are compliant. The DPO worked with the Chief State Solicitor's Office to develop a data processing agreement which mandates that processing will take place in compliance with GDPR; where an OGP framework is used, the contract also mandates that processing will take place in compliance with GDPR. All new suppliers are now assessed for compliance before contracts are finalised. The DPO presented to all senior managers to highlight the measures they need to put in place at this stage to ensure compliance with this Judgement; the Senior Management Team is assessing current for compliance. The DPO has also developed training to assist teams in assessing compliance as part of the procurement on an ongoing basis. The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) released a guidance note on how organisations should approach compliance with the Schrems II judgement in relation to international data transfers. This guidance is functionally identical to the guidance issued by the DPO to the

management team on foot of that ruling in July, so PAS is in a good position to implement these recommendations.

Data Protection

Data is essential to all administrative business. In collecting personal data from our candidates, selection board members, suppliers and staff members, the organisation has a responsibility to use it both effectively and ethically. In striking the necessary balance between an individual's right to privacy and legitimate business requirements, it is critical that all staff work to the highest attainable standards. The Code on the Protection of Personal Data was updated and communicated to all staff.

From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, PAS recognised the importance of ensuring that information governance and data protection were considered as part of the foundation of the new procedures developed to allow staff to work remotely and support the Government response to the crisis. In March 2020, the DPO was involved in on all discussions on possible approaches to remote working, and conducted a Data Protection Impact Assessment on:

- The use of Zoom for video interviews and internal staff meetings
- The use of scanned copies of Candidate photo ID to confirm identity as part of remote interviewing process
- Receipt of emailed copies of photo ID (also relevant as part of the Clearance process)
- SurveyMonkey for temporary assignments schemes.

In conjunction with this, the DPO also created guidelines to ensure that staff and Interview Boards working remotely would be aware of their responsibilities regarding data protection when working from home, including:

- Tips for remote interviewing
- Working remotely using Sharefile
- working using a VPN or Citrix
- Tips to avoid a data breach when working from home

A Records Management project was scoped out in 2020, which will begin to be conducted in 2021. This project will encompass arranging Certificates of Destruction for non-essential records from National Archives, ensuring the files held by PAS are compliant with the retention schedule, training staff on records management procedures and ensuring that records management is built into the new file management system to be introduced as part of the Office 365 project.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

The Public Appointments Service has one designated FOI Decision Maker and one Internal Reviewer (with an alternative for each role should the Decision Maker/Internal Reviewer be absent or involved in the subject matter in any way). A breakdown of FOI requests for 2020 is set out below.

Request Decision	Total
Granted	6
Part-Granted	15
Refused	3
Handled outside FOI	4
Request withdrawn	2
Grand Total	30

The Public Appointments Service published an updated Publication Scheme in 2020 and this is available on www.publicjobs.ie.

Compliance with the Official Languages Act 2003

The current Irish Language Scheme covers the period 2017 to 2020. This Scheme was based on the guidelines of the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and its content informed by the experience of delivering on commitments made in the previous Scheme; the submissions made by the public; ongoing feedback from customers; a review of the level of demand for services in the Irish language and suggestions put forward by staff. The Public Appointments Service continues to deliver on its commitments and to build on the progress achieved over the period of the last scheme.

The Management Board keeps the effective operation of the Scheme under review. Responsibility for the day-to-day monitoring of the Scheme rests with senior management of the organisation. As the role of the Public Appointments Service evolves over time, every effort is made to take advantage of any new opportunities to enhance the service provided through Irish to members of the public.

Compliance with the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) Codes of Practice

The Compliance function in PAS co-ordinate the review process under the CPSA Codes. It has a system in place to act on the outcomes from these reviews in order to continually improve the business processes and customer service provided.

The review process entails reviewing all relevant information from the selection process, ensuring that critical information is made available, and developing an understanding of the process involved in the specific competition under review. Consultations are held with selection board members in the majority of cases. The Reviewer may, from time to time, make recommendations on foot of their review findings. The recommendations are generally made to the internal Quality Group. An overview of the level and types of appeals is set out below. A total of 251 requests for review/appeals were processed during 2020, as follows:

Section 7	Section 8	Outside of Codes
229	18	4

Of the 251 received, a total of 24 requests for review were successful for candidates and the original decision of PAS was overturned.

Quality Improvement Programme

In 2020, PAS continued the process of embedding a quality management system in PAS, with a dedicated Quality Administrator team in place. Learning from review conducted under the CPSA Codes of Practice also feeds into the quality process in addition to comprehensive quality reviews into all issues occurring in the organisation (and significant “near-misses”).

Protected Disclosure Act 2014

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosure Act 2014 requires the publication of a report each year relating to the number of protected disclosures made in the preceding year and also for the publication of information with regard to any actions taken in response to protected disclosures made. No protected disclosures were received by PAS in 2020.

APPENDIX I

Summary of Recruitment Activity 1 st January – 31 st December 2020	
No. of Competitions Advertised	
358	

	No. of Applications	No. Assigned/Recommended
Temporary Clerical Officer	9,907	1,565
Clerical Officer	26,356	1,388
Executive Officer	15,104	493
Administrative Officer	5,912	134
Higher Executive Officer	-	61
Assistant Principal	3,951	112
Principal Officer	-	45
Total	61,230	3,798

Senior Executive Recruitment	865	16
Top Level Appointments Committee	2,113	10
Professional/Technical/Specialist	7,776	560
Local Government	3,028	113
Medical Consultants	470	107
State Boards	2,453	138
Non-State Boards	-	-
Large Volume Competitions (not incl. core grades)	4,164	144
Justice Sector	3,813	345
Temporary Unit	19	9
Total	24,701	1,442

Overall Totals	85,931	5,240
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APPENDIX II – Sustainability Reporting

Overview of Energy Usage in 2020

The main energy usage relates to heating/lighting and providing water in the office in Chapter House.

In 2020, 640 MWh of energy was consumed, consisting of:

427 MWh of electricity;

213 MWh of fossil fuels.

Actions Undertaken in 2020

In 2020, the Public Appointments Service undertook a range of initiatives to improve the energy performance, including:

- Raising staff awareness of energy savings through promotional material and reminders in relation to energy usage
- Shutting off unused equipment
- Close monitoring and control of energy usage including remote manual interventions with the heating system controls
- Timed controllers on larger office equipment
- Replacement of broken light fittings with low energy LED lighting
- Upgrading of Lifts in Chapter House.

Actions Planned for 2021

In 2021, the Public Appointments Service intend to further improve the energy performance by undertaking the following initiatives:

- Continue to raise staff awareness in relation to energy savings
- Continue to manually intervene in the Heating System by using remote BMS controls when necessary

- Upgrading of Air Conditioning system to more energy efficient units on Floor 3
- Upgrading of lighting to LED fittings with presence sensors on Floor 3.

Green Public Procurement

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is a process where public authorities seek to source goods, services or works with a reduced environmental impact. Circular 20/19 Promoting the use of Environmental and Social Considerations in Public Procurement, highlights the Government's priority in promoting Green Public Procurement. The Circular instructs organisations to consider the inclusion of green criteria in their procurement processes.

PAS uses Office of Government Procurement Frameworks where possible. Where there is no suitable framework, PAS conducts its own procurement and all budget holders are required to comply with the PAS Procurement Procedures. These Procedures highlight the importance of Green Public Procurement.

In 2020 the Request for Information issued in relation to Project Nova referenced this commitment. The Request for Tender issued in relation to Managed Print Services also referenced this, and obliged framework members to outline all environmental certifications held or standards met by the proposed devices in the framework member's response.

APPENDIX III

Statement on Internal Financial Control

Responsibility for System of Internal Financial Control

As Accounting Officer, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Public Appointments Service.

This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to me and my other obligations as Head of the Office. Any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely manner. Maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

I have fulfilled my responsibilities in relation to the requirements of the Service Management Agreement between the Public Appointments Service and the National Shared Service Office for the provision of shared services (e.g. Human Resource and Payroll). I rely on a letter of assurance from the Accounting Officer of the Vote for Shared Services that the appropriate controls are exercised in the provision of shared services to the Public Appointments Service.

The position in regard to the financial control environment, the framework of administrative procedures, management reporting and internal audit is as follows.

Financial Control Environment

I confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place.

- Financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability
- Reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned
- Formal procedures have been established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action

- There is an Audit Committee to advise me in discharging my responsibilities for the internal financial control system
- Procedures for all key business processes have been documented
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

Administrative Controls and Management Reporting

I confirm that a framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting is in place, including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability. This includes the following elements.

- There is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management
- There are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts
- A risk management system operates within the Public Appointments Service
- There are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems
- There are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management discipline
- The office ensures that there is an appropriate focus on good practice in purchasing and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines with the exception of one contract to the value of €58,778.

Internal Audit and Audit Committee

I confirm that the Public Appointments Service engages an internal audit function with appropriately trained personnel, which operates in accordance with a written charter which I have approved. Its work is informed by analysis of the financial risks to which the Public Appointments Service is exposed and its annual internal audit plans, approved by me, are based on this analysis. These plans aim to cover the key controls on a rolling basis over a reasonable period. The internal audit function is reviewed periodically by me and by the Audit Committee. I have put procedures in place to ensure that the reports of the internal audit function are followed up.

Non-compliance with procurement rules

The Public Appointments Service ensures that there is an appropriate focus on good practice in purchasing and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines. One

contract entered into during 2020, and with a value of €58,778 did not fully comply with the guidelines.

In line with the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) and Public Procurement Update Note published on 22 March 2020, and due to the urgency of this requirement it was approved at Management Board level that PAS engage immediately with a suitable external vendor to reduce the timelines to deliver this project to deliver a system to support the Temporary Assignments Scheme. Engaging in a full procurement process would have delayed delivery of the technical solution, resulting in untenable risk to the system being available in time to respond to a potential surge in Covid-19 cases.

PAS has provided details of non-competitive contracts in the annual return in respect of Circular 40/2002 to the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Risk and Control Framework

The Office has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

A risk register is in place which identifies the key risks facing the Office and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is reviewed and updated by the Management Board on a quarterly basis. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level. The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and assigns responsibility for operation of controls to specific staff.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for corrective action and to the Management Board, where relevant, in a timely way. I confirm that key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

Review of Effectiveness

I confirm that the Office has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures (discussed further in the next section). The office's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors and the senior management within the Public Appointments Service responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework.

Internal Financial Control Issues

An internal audit of Asset Management conducted in late 2020 identified some areas for improvements in 2021; those which mainly relate to the documentation of procedures will be progressed immediately, and the remaining recommendations relate to the upgrade to our Financial Management System, which is due to be completed in mid-2021. An Internal Audit on Accounting and Reporting was also conducted in 2020, with all of the recommendations implemented other than the recommendation which is also related to the upgrade of the Financial Management System.

No other weaknesses in internal financial control were identified in relation to 2020 that require disclosure in the appropriation account.

Shirley Comerford

Accounting Officer

Public Appointments Service

31st March 2021