



Annual Report 2023



An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí
Public Appointments Service

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

Following another busy and successful year, we are pleased to present the 2023 Annual Report of the Public Appointments Service. As is clear from this report, 2023 was a year where the Public Appointments Service focused on ensuring that the services we provide can meet the needs of the Civil and Public Service into the future. There were significant developments in terms of our use and development of technologies, our Nua26 strategy was published, and, alongside our delivery partner, we co-designed the Blueprint for Welcoming and Supporting Disabled Employees in the Civil and Public Sector. Project NOVA, which is the project tasked with identifying a new recruitment platform to replace STAR, hit a major milestone in 2023 by going out for procurement after significant work was carried out by the project team to identify the requirements the new system should meet. While ensuring that the organisation is future focused, we continued to meet the challenges presented by the current employment landscape, while meeting the needs of our clients; advertising 658 competitions, conducting 18,080 interviews, and assigning 11,467 people to roles across the Civil and Public Service. This was achieved in the context of staff managing the change associated with hybrid working, as Chapter House reopened fully with all major building work concluded.

None of this could be achieved without the dedication, flexibility and commitment of the staff of the Public Appointments Service, supported and guided by the members of the Board and the Audit Committee. We would also like to express our thanks to the selection board members and client partners, who helped us to deliver a high quality, independent and merit-based recruitment and selection process in 2023.

Facing into the challenges of 2024, I look forward to this organisation continuing to meet the challenges of the future, when we hope to complete the NOVA procurement process and have a new recruitment platform in place, as well as launching a new brand for the organisation to ensure we are well placed to attract candidates who will deliver for the Civil and public Service well into the future.

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 and certain Garda competitions for promotion 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.

Delivering Recruitment Excellence

People are central to our business and it is our priority to provide our clients with an efficient and prompt service, recruiting high calibre candidates to support a diverse public service. In a competitive environment, we recognised the need to strengthen and evolve our recruitment model to respond to the changing needs of our clients and our candidates. We recognise our key role in shaping a high performing, values-led public service workforce for the people of Ireland.

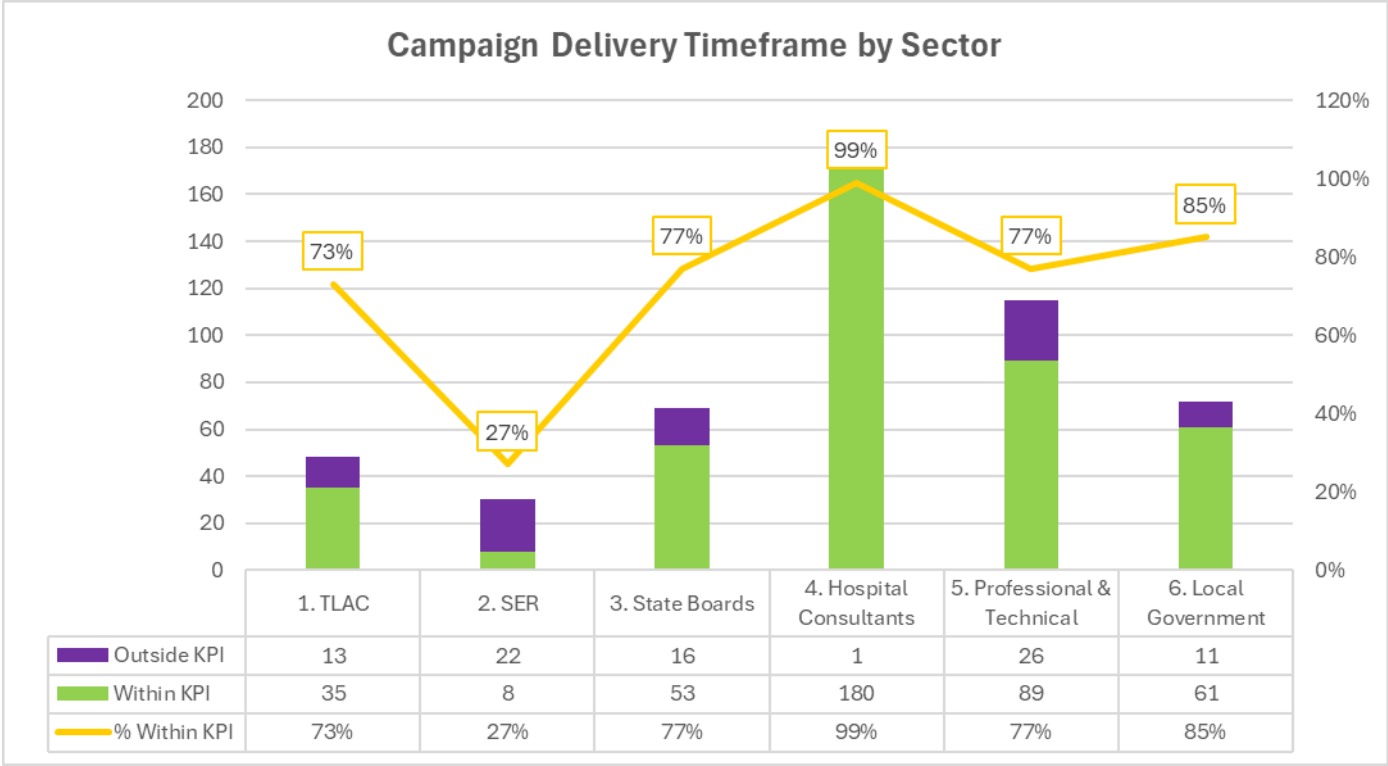
Recruitment Service Delivery 2023

The level of funding provided in 2023 reflected the Government’s commitment in supporting the organisation to continue to fulfil its statutory mandate to recruit quality staff to the civil and wider public service, and support and facilitate the implementation of the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards.

Delivery timescales is a key area of focus for the organisation and there was significant effort put into delivering improvements in timelines in 2023. While 96% of vacancies were filled for clients, including key specialist posts, and campaign delivery timeframes were achieved for 83% of campaigns (target 80%), it is acknowledged that there is significant room for improvement in general grade assignment timeframes (which also has a target of 80%). Improvement was however seen in all KPIs over the course of 2023. The charts below reports on the achievement of key recruitment service delivery KPIs broken down by recruitment type and by activity type. Where timescales were consistently below the target, resources were reallocated to those areas and improvements were seen in those areas by Q4.

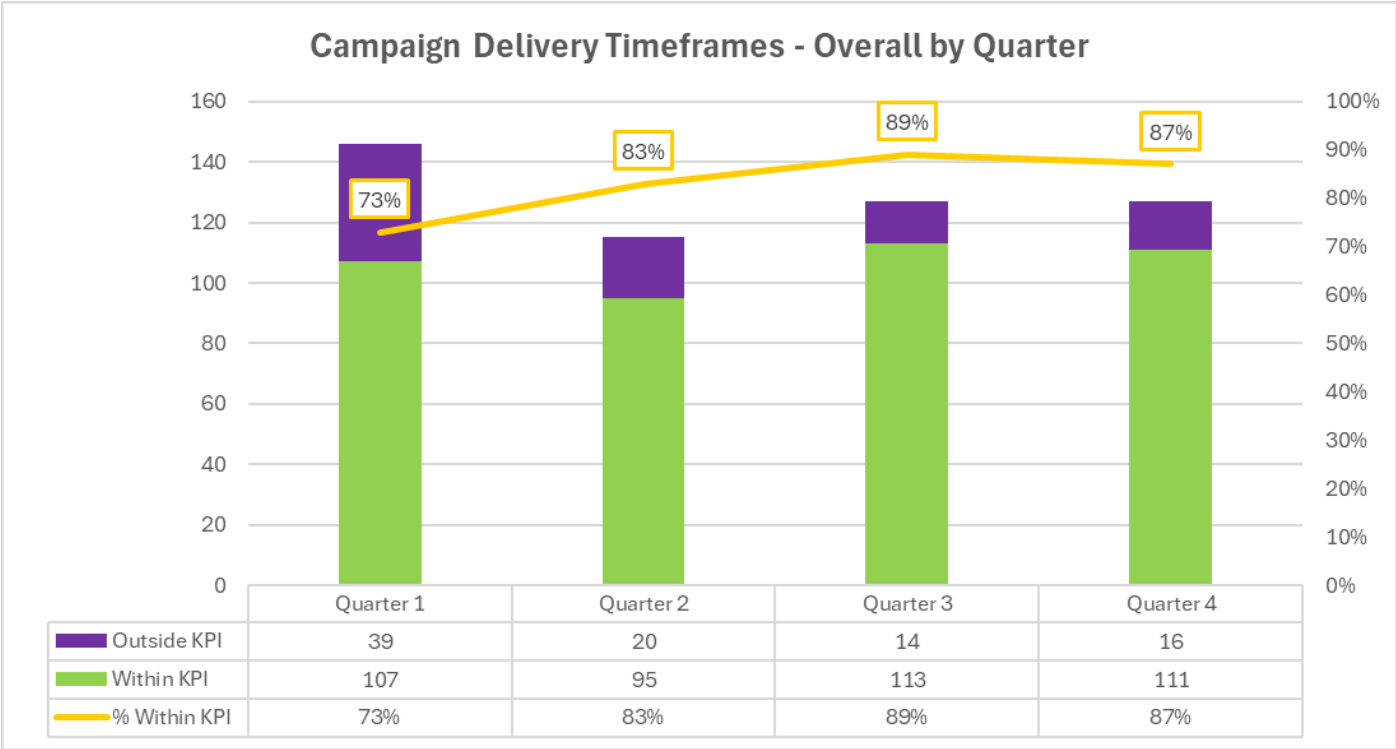
We also increased activity in all areas in 2023 in comparison to 2022 as demonstrated below.

Headline KPIs

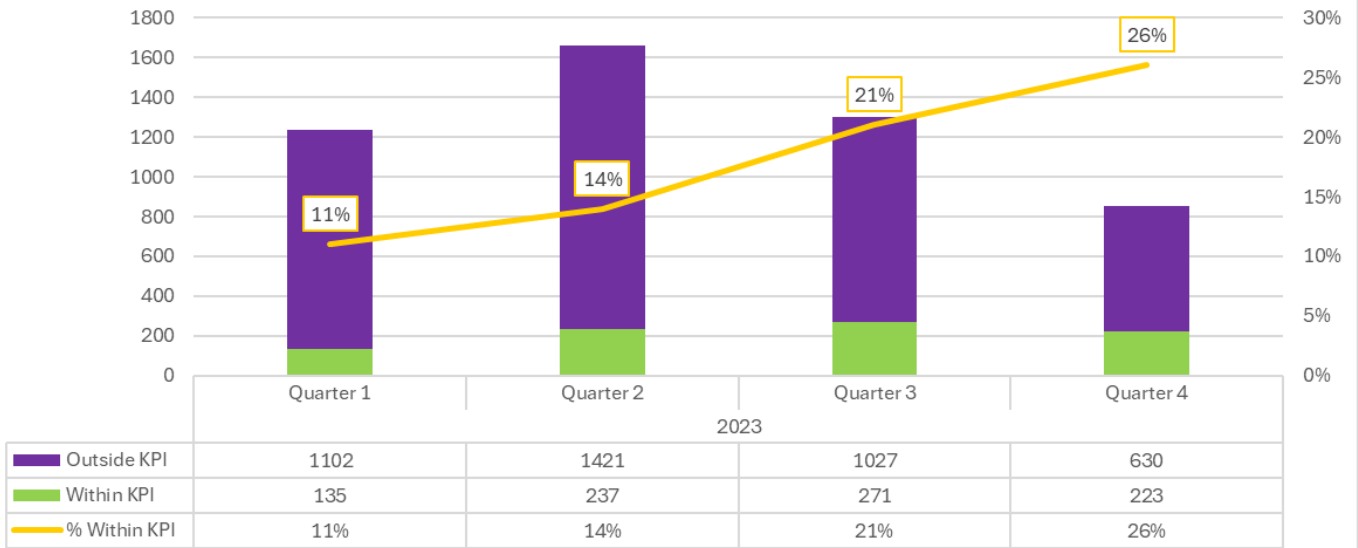


SER – Senior Executive Recruitment

TLAC – Recruitment on behalf of the Top Level Appointments Committee

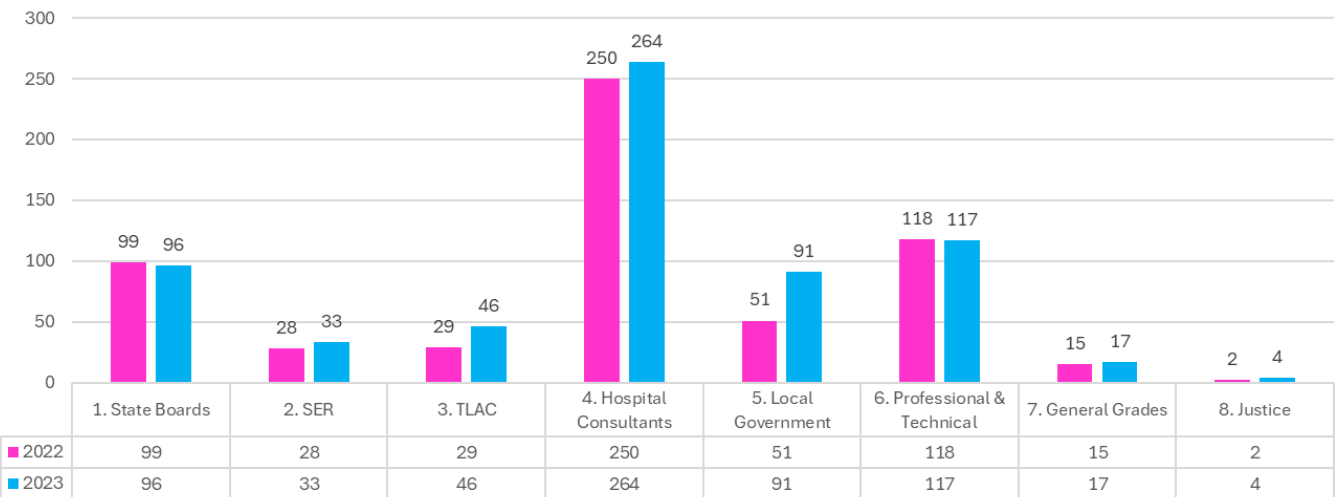


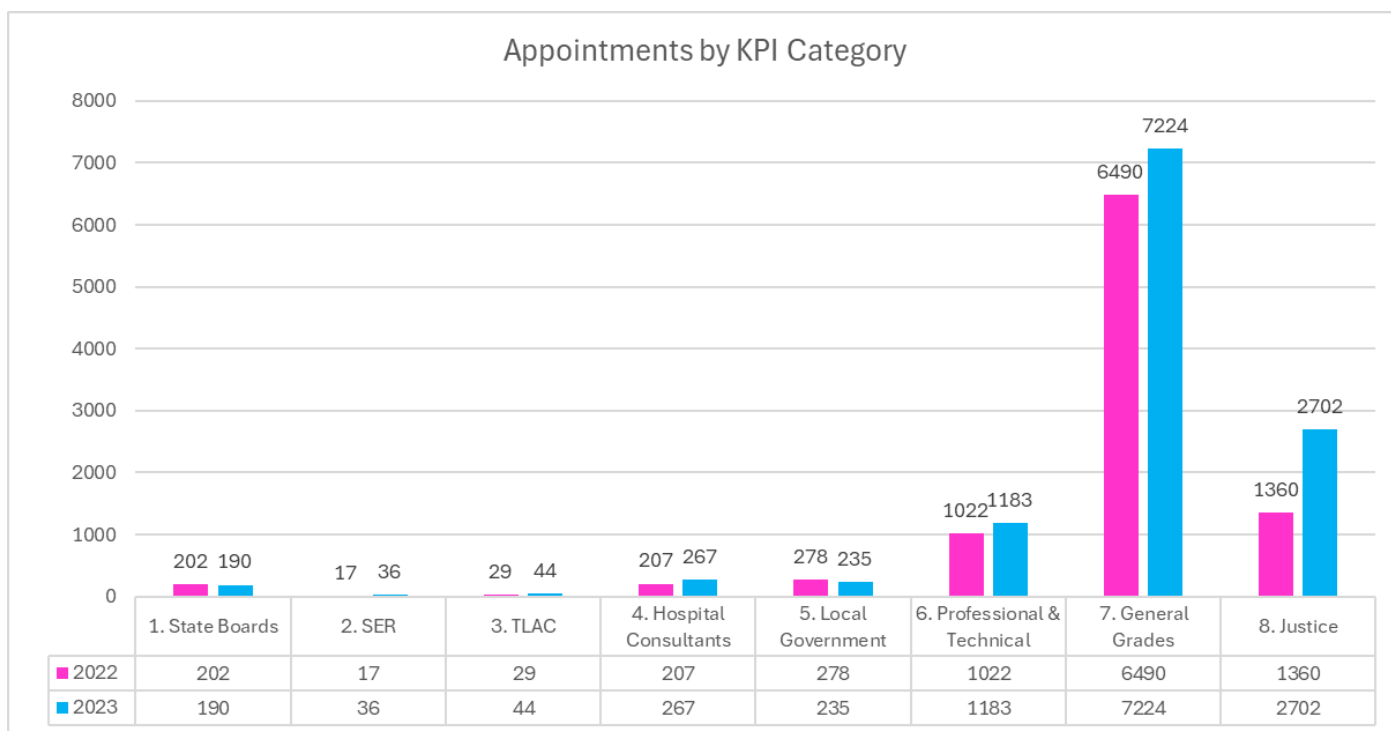
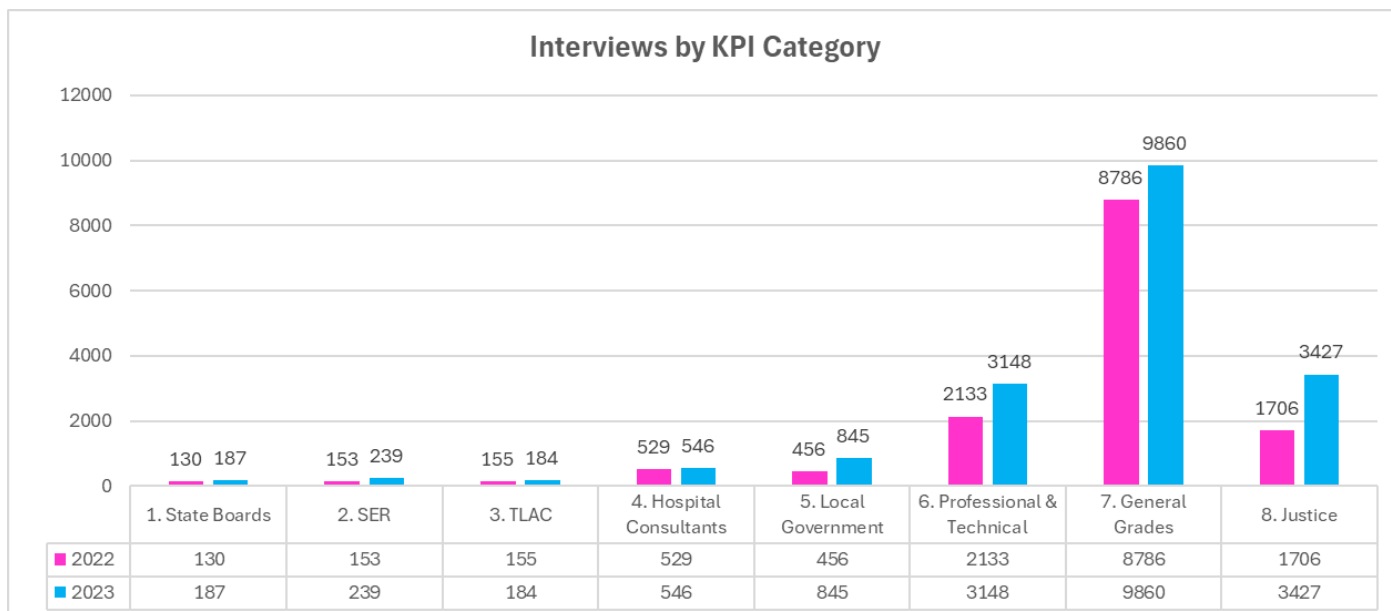
General Grade Assignments - Overall Quarter by Quarter



Advertisements, Interviews and Assignment numbers 2022 vs 2023

Advertised Campaigns by KPI Category





Client and Candidate Experience

We are committed to delivering recruitment excellence by enhancing our service delivery model and ensuring positive customer experiences. In engaging with our candidates and clients, it is important to have a mechanism to regularly listen and respond to feedback to ensure that our services, processes, and digital solutions meet user needs.

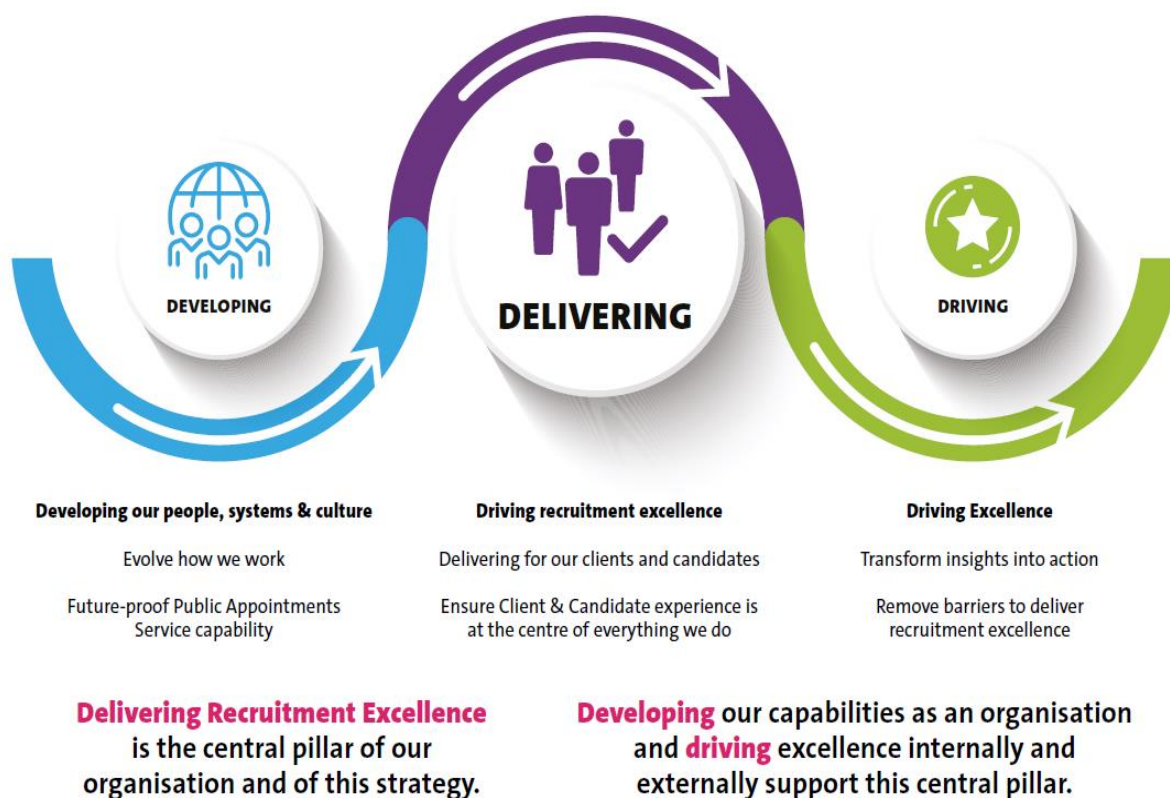
In 2023, we developed a Customer Engagement Plan based on learning and best practice. The Customer Engagement Plan informs a more regular and strategic approach to customer engagement and provides a framework that governs an organisation-wide approach to capturing feedback to assess satisfaction and inform user-led improvements. The plan is being delivered on a phased basis over 2023 and 2024. Overall satisfaction levels are set out below; these were generally positive throughout 2023 and actions were put in place where any issues were identified.

Client and Candidate Satisfaction	2023
Client satisfaction with the quality of new entrants	92%
Client satisfaction with the service provided	85%
Candidate satisfaction with the service provided	85%
Client satisfaction with the level of retention of new entrants	75%

Strategy Development, Delivery and Monitoring

Following the delivery of the NUA23 strategy, we have developed a new corporate strategy, NUA26 focused on three strategic pillars. These pillars will guide our priorities over the coming years and are underpinned by an implementation framework to ensure execution and delivery of the strategy. Delivering recruitment excellence is the central pillar of this new strategy, in recognition of the need to improve our service delivery timescales and work with strategic partners to provide responsive and tailored recruitment solutions. This central pillar is supported by our plans to work with clients to remove barriers to delivering recruitment excellence and to leverage our insights and experience as the centralised recruiter across public service roles. The central pillar is also supported by our commitment to evolving and futureproofing how we operate and ensuring we have the necessary capabilities needed to deliver.

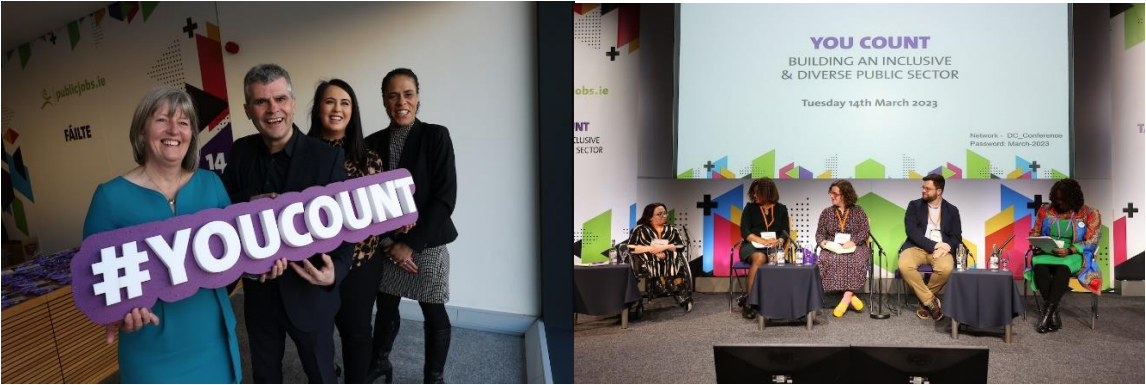
We have a strong vision, driven by our mission and values. In delivering on NUA26, we will continuously work to provide high-quality and prompt recruitment services to our clients; we will provide fair, transparent recruitment processes that meet candidate expectations; and we will ensure that our staff work in a highly efficient, innovative, and inclusive recruitment organisation.



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

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 legislation. To further embed and promote human rights and equality principles the organisation took a number of actions in 2023, including the embedding of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion function and the delivery on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (ED&I Strategy).

Our first ED&I strategy ended in December 2023. The refreshed ED&I strategy for 2023-2026 will continue to focus on the three key areas: better data and insights, better processes and continuing to influence and lead by example for our partners and clients on inclusive recruitment, building on the success of the last three years.



In March 2023, to spotlight the Equality Monitoring Data Review we brought an array of local and international expertise to Dublin Castle to discuss how data can support diversity and inclusion in our ever-changing workplace. This review is part of an important step in building a strong foundation of equality data, alongside the lived experience, to inform and drive forward diversity and inclusion in the public sector. This has given us a baseline from which to measure progress and allowed us to set targets in NUA26 for increasing the representation of underrepresented groups. The next phase of this project will be the implementation of an equality monitoring dashboard.

We have made significant progress in relation to ED&I in support of the wider public sector and these are discussed in the next section.

Driving Excellence

Readying the public service for the workplace of the future, a key pillar in our Nua 26 strategy, meant that we implemented several projects with the aim of ensuring a system-wide commitment to removing barriers, particularly for underrepresented groups and adopting an agile approach to attracting and retaining talented and diverse candidates to public service roles. We recognise the value of developing foresight and the power of leveraging our networks to gain insights into the labour market, recruitment trends and the evolving skills requirements that will ensure our recruitment and assessment processes are inclusive and meets the needs of the workforce of the future, and undertook several pieces of work, detailed below, with a view to achieving this strategic goal.

TLAC Review

The TLAC Review was established to independently assess the current end to end recruitment process in place for Senior Public Service posts, in particular in the Civil Service, to provide recommendations and guidance on measures and strategies to improve processes and outcomes.

In the above context, to examine the role and processes of the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) and how it is supported:

- Examine the role of relevant stakeholders in the recruitment process with reference to relevant Governance frameworks and the Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service.
- In relation to Secretaries General posts in the Civil Service, review the process of confirming appointments including the requirement for a Government Memorandum and decision.
- Consideration of analogous recruitment and selection processes undertaken in other countries.
- Review the current approach, criteria and end to end processes for Interim appointments to Senior Public Service posts and to make recommendations.

The Report was published in 2023 and the Public Appointments Service and the Department of Public Expenditure NDP and Reform will work together to implement the recommendations of the report in 2024.

Capability Framework

A job analysis project to review all of the General Service competencies from Clerical Officer to Principal Officer was completed in 2022 and the output was a Capability Framework with four key Capabilities; Building Future Readiness, Evidence-Informed Delivery, Leading and Empowering and Communicating and Collaborating.

There have been two pilots using the Framework— one on an Internal Higher Executive Officer competition and the second on the Assistant Principal HR specialist competition. Comprehensive feedback was gathered from both candidates and Selection Board Board members on the framework, which was very positively received. Some improvements have been made to the model and the supporting documentation based on the feedback.

Detailed supporting material was required to support the roll-out of the Capability Framework. We have been working to ensure the Capability Framework is made available in an engaging and accessible manner, and it is now available on our website. We have produced a summary of the framework with guidance for candidates, in addition to a pre-recorded Information Presentation that that is also hosted on Publicjobs.ie and available to anyone wishing to learn more. An e-learning module has also been developed that will be available to clients across the Public Sector with comprehensive instructions on how to interview and assess candidates using the new

framework. On the basis of a request from the Learning and Development Managers Network, we have also produced a presentation deck that may be used to brief candidates on the model and can be tailored by individual HR departments.

There has been a significant focus on engaging with stakeholders on the Capability framework, including in-person presentations to the Civil Service Management Board (CMSB), Learning and Development Managers Network, the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA), the HR Managers Network, the Corporate Assistant Secretary Group and the Public Service Recruiters Network.

The new model is being rolled out as competitions arise for general service competitions and relevant Professional and Technical roles from February 2024.

Sharing Best Practice

Sharing best practice in assessment is an important part of the organisation's remit and a focal point of our commitment to Delivering Excellence as outlined in the Nua26 strategy, and in 2023 the Assessment Services Team took part in numerous events, including an information exchange with the Cypriot Government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and participation in the Ahead seminar on employing people with special needs. Working closely with colleagues from Corporate Governance and Recruitment, the Assessment Services Team have also been working on the issue of merit and how it is defined and implemented by the Public Appointments Service.

The State Boards Team presented to the African Professional Network of Ireland, the Irish Institute of Directors and to the Independent Living Movement of Ireland. The organisation also attended the Ploughing Championship to promote public service roles and roles on State Boards.

The Board Member Unit (BMU) trained 93 selection board members in 2023, with additional shadowing being rolled out for new selection board members. We have also undertaken a review of our suite of Interview Skills e-learning modules, to ensure they are fully accessible for selection board members and continue to share these modules across public sector organisations.

Public Service Recruiters Network

In 2023, we built on the success of the Public Service Recruiters Network which was launched in April 2022. The purpose of the Network is to facilitate greater collaboration in recruitment and to maintain the high standards that are in place across the public service. There is a strong focus on the sharing of best practice across the public service, identifying common challenges/opportunities and working together to attract the best people to our organisations.

There has been an enthusiastic response to the establishment of the Network with over 66 organisations signed up. The network meets on a quarterly basis and is hosted by the Public Appointments Service, with key contributions from the CPSA. The Network offers a platform for the sharing of expertise and best practice across the public service in relation to recruitment and selection and includes a focus on key thematic areas stemming from the legislative and policy framework.

The sessions delivered in 2023 included a combination of online and two in-person events, that focused on the following areas:

- Power of ED&I data to drive change in the workplace
- Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021: key provisions relating to recruitment
- Shortlisting and Psychometric Testing: how to get from large numbers to small numbers
- New Civil Service Capability Framework
- Talent Attraction for the civil and public service

To gain a greater understanding of each subject area, the sessions include a combination of focused inputs (from the Public Appointments Service, Network members and external experts), as well as practical examples/case studies and Q&A. There was also an opportunity for networking, sharing experiences and building relationships.

Client Workforce Planning

We recognise that many of our clients are operating in complex and challenging environments with shifting priorities. Forecasting demand across our clients is a significant issue that impacts our ability to plan and respond to requirements and changing needs, particularly in the context of a competitive labour market. Our Client Relations Management team engage with each client to obtain projections of their resourcing requirements on a quarterly basis. Taking a collaborative approach to workforce planning is critical, to inform our recruitment strategies, schedule new competitions and to prioritise candidates for assessment so that they are available for assignment in a timely manner. Over 2023, we increased and maintained the engagement rate of clients who participate in quarterly workforce planning – an average of 80% of clients. In 2024, we will be introducing further initiatives to work with individual clients to improve the accuracy of their projections.

Untapped Resource: A Co-Designed Blueprint for Welcoming and Supporting Disabled Employees in the Civil and Public Sector

Funded by the Public Service Innovation Fund, our project on Transforming the Approach to Reasonable Accommodations for Disabled People took a co-design approach to making the process of assignment and onboarding more equitable and accessible for candidates with disabilities.

As part of the project, over 100 people, from 30 organisations across the civil and public sector, as well as other stakeholders, participated in a collaborative methodology – this included clients, candidates, disability advocates, support organisations and unions. Two civil service-wide Town Halls were convened as part of this project with over 700 employees in attendance.

Our delivery partner, Tilting the Lens, have provided a co-designed Blueprint for Welcoming and Supporting Disabled Employees in the Civil and Public Sector for action, that addresses key challenges identified at the assignment and onboarding stages. The blueprint includes nine recommendations that are designed to help public bodies implement and report on transparent actions to achieve long-term positive change in assignment and onboarding.

The recommendations are wide ranging and set out under the pillars of: People and Culture; Process and Systems; Governance and Policy. Some of these are specific to recruitment processes, whilst others require service-wide changes and the support of colleagues from across the public sector to deliver on these.

Inclusive Routes to Employment

Traveller and Roma Internships

In 2023 we supported the delivery of a Department of Justice 12-month, paid internships (at Clerical or Executive Officer level) for eight members of the Irish Traveller and Roma communities, hosted in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Houses of the Oireachtas, Department of Justice and the Public Appointments Service. The interns benefited from practical on-the-job experience, as well as the opportunity to develop professionally and personally through approved training courses. 60 per cent of the interns now have secure permanent roles in the civil service to date.

Willing Able Mentoring (WAM)

2023 was the second year that WAM graduates on the ten-month paid internship programme, run in partnership with Ahead, have had a route to permanency at the end of their placements. There are currently twenty 2023 WAM graduates in placements across the civil service, who will have the opportunity to apply to a confined Executive Officer competition in 2024.

Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL)

The award-winning OWL programme is facilitated by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in collaboration with KARE and WALK. In September 2023, there was a new intake of eight trainees who are progressing through this programme of applied learning, development, and socialisation programme for adults with an intellectual disability that takes place over an eleven-month period. Established in 2019, there are currently 17 OWL graduates in permanent, part-time roles in the civil service.

Civil Service Eligibility Criteria Review

In early 2023 the narrow eligibility criteria for civil service opportunities were identified as a barrier to access for those with a migrant background who wished to pursue a career in the civil service.

Through Open Doors, we commissioned a report to look at this issue from leading immigration services consultants Fragomen. This report sets out where consideration might be given to widening citizenship criteria to include those on a range of immigration permissions, giving the Irish civil service access to the large pool of currently untapped talent and reducing or removing this structural barrier for those with a migrant background.

This research prompted the establishment of an interdepartmental working group with representatives from the Departments of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, Justice, Enterprise, Trade & Employment, Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth and the Public Appointments Service who met throughout 2023 to review the current criteria, to discuss the options for broadening eligibility, the possible risks associated with the move and possible mitigation measures. In September 2023, the eligibility criteria for civil service roles were expanded to include all Stamp 4 permission holders. Additional stamps are under review.

Developing Our People, Systems and Culture

We value a workplace culture that embodies excellence, innovation, trust and inclusion, and a key component of our Nua 26 strategy is to lead others by our example. We take pride in what we do and want all staff to embrace our identity as professional recruiters for public service careers that matter. Building our capacity to be customer-centric, results-driven and open to change will equip us to meet the challenges of today and the future, and several actions were undertaken in 2023 with a view to achieving this aim.

Project NOVA

As an organisation that strives to be future focused, we identified the need to acquire an industry leading, mature, established, configurable SaaS recruitment solution to meet our ambitions and requirements for service delivery. A SaaS Recruitment Solution provided by an industry leading Recruitment technology specialist would provide the organisation with access to the latest functionality and future technological developments which will provide the opportunity to enhance service delivery and evolve to meet our stakeholders' demands.

NOVA was the project initiated to replace our recruitment system. The procurement process for a recruitment solution that will be at the forefront of recruitment technology has been completed, with a view to signing contracts in 2024. 2024 will be focused on the implementation of the new system.

We would like to thank the members of the External Advisory Committee who provided valuable support and expertise to the NOVA team during the procurement process.

Digital Strategy

In February of 2023 we published our first Digital Strategy (2023-2025) which sets out actions to ensure that we take a structured approach to governance and collaboration on digital projects and initiatives so that we achieve our strategic ambitions and deliver sustainable solutions to address key business challenges. This Digital Strategy is designed to define the direction and major initiatives for ICT in the organisation for the next three years to ensure that ICT is an enabler of the organisational strategy and the key strategic goals.

2023 was a year of rapid advancement in AI, particularly in Generative AI systems such as ChatGPT. In response to this, we established a Working Group on AI with representatives from across the organisation, to share and discuss perspectives on the benefits and challenges of AI and allow the organisation to effectively respond to developments in this area.

Digital Developments

One of the priorities identified in the Digital Strategy is to equip our staff with access to the technologies, data, and applications needed to do their work effectively and efficiently. Central to that is maximising our investment in the Microsoft 365 Cloud platform. Microsoft 365 provides us with a consolidated platform for all our communication and collaboration requirements, with voice calls, videoconferencing, meeting scheduling and instant messaging all routed through this single platform. During 2023, we modernised and upgraded our boardrooms and meeting rooms with state-of-the-art audio-visual technology. Microsoft Teams Room videoconferencing is the underlying software technology, as it integrates seamlessly with the rest of the Microsoft 365 ecosystem, ensuring booking and participating in video calls is intuitive and easy for staff.

We also witnessed a growth in usage of some of the Microsoft 365 project management and task management applications that are available to our staff, resulting in increased productivity and efficiencies.

Building on momentum from previous years, in 2023, we increased adoption of the Microsoft Power Platform and created new applications aimed at reducing manual processes and increasing efficiency. We aim to continue to analyse this low-code development approach and consider how best to continue its adoption into the future.

The software that underpins publicjobs.ie also underwent a range of software development cycles in 2023, with a continued focus on security, accessibility, and the candidate experience. These enhancements included the creation of a dedicated recruitment hub on publicjobs.ie for Medical Consultants that was developed in collaboration with the HSE. Further refinements of the candidate application form were also introduced to allow for greater flexibility and usability along with improvements to how the Irish language is displayed and promoted through Irish recruitment competitions.

Cyber Security

The cyber security landscape continues to be a complex and ever evolving challenge for public and private sector organisations alike. The protection of the data we hold and the computer network infrastructure is essential to uninterrupted recruitment service delivery. Throughout 2023, we focussed on three key areas: (i) staff cyber security awareness, (ii) investment in cutting edge technologies and (iii) rigorous, proactive maintenance and patching of our infrastructure and corporate devices.

A programme of cyber security awareness training was rolled out to all staff, with regular simulated phishing email campaigns conducted to help ascertain how successful the training was in instilling good cyber security practices. Recognising that 90% of all cyber security attacks start with a phishing email, we invested in a new email security platform that utilises artificial intelligence to identify suspicious emails. This has significantly strengthened our protection against threats in this area.

We have seen a marked increase in notifications of critical and zero-day vulnerabilities spanning many of the different technologies that we use. We have endeavoured to respond immediately to notifications of this nature and apply the required patch or software update without delay. In anticipation of the new NIS 2 EU directive which will come into effect in October 2024, we have been assessing our readiness and identifying areas that need to be strengthened throughout 2023 to ensure we are compliant with the directive. The organisation had no significant cyber security breaches during 2023.

Chapter House Refurbishment Project

The Chapter House Refurbishment Project reached its conclusion in 2023, with final snagging works completed and the installation and commissioning of Audio-Visual Technologies to facilitate Blended Recruitment models. The final construction phase of the project was the Second Floor of Chapter House and this re-opened in February 2023, which allowed staff to return to the office and allowed the launch of the Blended Working Policy for the Public Appointments Service.

People and Culture

Learning & Development

In 2023, our Learning and Development Partner collaborated with a number of other units in the organisation to roll-out organisation specific training. This included, the IT team, who delivered sessions to support staff in a range of areas, including cyber security. The Data Protection Officer also delivered data protection training on various aspects of data protection. The Project Services Unit presented webinars – Project Management 101 – highlighting the advantages of applying a project management framework and signposting internal resources available to teams. People Management programmes were run for junior and middle manager groups with programmes including one-to-one coaching sessions for participants. A number of managers also participated in both the Common Purpose Emerging Leaders and Senior Leaders programmes and embedded learning from these initiatives in their work.

There was a strong focus on supporting managers and staff to achieve organisational goals and adapt to change with sessions on goal setting, building meaningful connections in a hybrid world and the power to change. We also delivered a comprehensive programme aimed at developing a range of skills to maximise each staff member's workday in the “Better Workday Programme”.

We continued to provide the Professional Certificate in Resourcing and Recruitment (developed by the Public Appointments Service in conjunction with the IPA) to staff; resulting in a Level 8 special purpose award accredited by NUI for both our own staff and staff from other human resources teams in the public service.

In 2023 a number of staff were given additional training to support candidates who present with reasonable accommodations, including Disability Awareness Training, Creating Inclusive Recruitment, Building Disability Confidence, Successful Communications Means Accessible Communications and Supporting Neurodiverse Employees. This focus on skills development will enable and empower staff to confidently support candidates through the recruitment process.

Specialist training took place from Transparency International Ireland as part of our participation in their Integrity at Work programme. 14 managers were trained in Managing Investigations in the Workplace on this two-day workshop. We also marked International Stand Up to Bullying Day launching an e-learning module on workplace bullying and harassment. Other specialist training took place covering areas such as data analytics and project management.

In November, an organisation wide call to action took place with our CEO inviting all staff to attend a one-hour webinar on Climate Action. Following on from this all members of the Management Board completed Climate Action Leadership training in early December.

Policy Developments

In December, a new Gender Identity & Expression Policy was published, to support staff who may wish to transition or affirm their gender in the workplace. In December, we also published our Gender Pay Gap Reporting information for 2023 on publicjobs.ie. Similar to 2022, our gender pay gap reporting information shows a gender pay gap in favour of females. This broadly reflects the gender breakdown of our workforce.

Hybrid Working

Our system of Office Neighbourhoods was launched in 2023; these are dedicated areas of the office where specific teams / departments can work together, connect, and collaborate. Onsite attendance and desk capacity is managed locally within teams and Neighbourhoods, and a number of supports have been put in place to assist with this.

In September we ran several internal training sessions for staff as part of a ‘Blended Working Essentials’ series, to address actions based on staff feedback to further embed a hybrid working model in the organisation. We also carried out a Work and Wellbeing check in survey amongst staff up to HEO level. The anonymous survey sought to gather the perspectives and feedback of staff regarding their day-to-day roles, career development ambitions, and general health and wellbeing.

Blended Working Essentials Series

Training Sessions



An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí
Public Appointments Service

To familiarise/refresh yourself with critical areas of working in the office and from home.

COMMON IT ISSUES & SOLVING THEM

→

Tuesday/ Thursday
5 / 7 Sept @ 11:30

FLEXICLOCK 101- FOR USERS & MANAGERS

→

Tuesday/ Thursday
12 / 14 Sept @ 11:30

CAPELLA - GUIDELINES FOR LINE MANAGERS

→

Tuesday/ Thursday
19 / 21 Sept @ 11:30

PLANNING FOR YOUR BEST WORKDAY

→

Tuesday/ Thursday
26 / 28 Sept @ 11:30



Corporate 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
Chairman Mr Tom Moran, former Secretary General, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Board Members Ms Margaret McCabe, Chief Executive, Public Appointments Service Mr Fiona Quinn, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Housing, Planning and Local Government Dr Eddie Molloy, HR Consultant (to October 2023) Ms Anne-Marie Taylor, Management Consultant (to October 2023)

Ms Mary Connaughton, Executive Director, CIPD

Ms Yvonne Cooke, Acting Executive Director of Human Resources and People Development, An Garda Síochána

Mr Colin Menton, Assistant Secretary, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Ms Anne Marie Hoey, National Director HR, HSE

Board Meetings

Five board meetings and a Board Strategy Session were held in 2023.

<i>Board Member</i>	<i>Number of meetings/strategy sessions Board Member was eligible to attend</i>	<i>% of meetings/strategy sessions Board Member attended</i>
Mr. Tom Moran (Chairperson)	6	100%
Ms. Margaret McCabe (CEO)	6	100%
Ms. Anne-Marie Taylor	5	100%
Dr. Eddie Molloy	5	100%
Mr. Colin Menton	6	50%
Ms. Mary Connaughton	6	33%
Ms. Yvonne Cooke	6	33%
Ms. Anne Marie Hoey	6	100%
Ms. Fiona Quinn	6	100%

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 of the effective use of all resources and, within the allocated resources, ensuring that the 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 ensures 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>
Margaret McCabe, Chief Executive, Public Appointments Service	Responsibility for implementation of Board policy, strategy, management, and operation of the Public Appointments

Catherine Dobbins, Head of Corporate Affairs	Service resides with the Corporate Executive, affected through the Chief Executive.
Niall Leavy, Head of Market Engagement	Responsible for corporate services, including HR, Finance, and Compliance and Quality Assurance (which incorporates Reviews under the CPSA Codes and all corporate governance functions).
Aoife Lyons, Head of Assessment Services	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.
Eimear O'Connor, Head of Recruitment Support and Service Delivery	Putting effective, efficient, and best practice assessment measures in place to select the best possible candidates for our clients.
Sinead Coleman, Head of Talent Acquisition for the Public Service	Responsible for maintaining and optimising the operations recruitment activity of the Public Appointments Services.
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 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.
Michelle Noone, Head of Senior and Executive Recruitment	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.
Rosemarie O'Mahony, Head of Digital Transformation, Strategy and Innovation	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.
Fiona Morgan, Head of People and Culture	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.
Aileen Tuliani, Head of Finance	

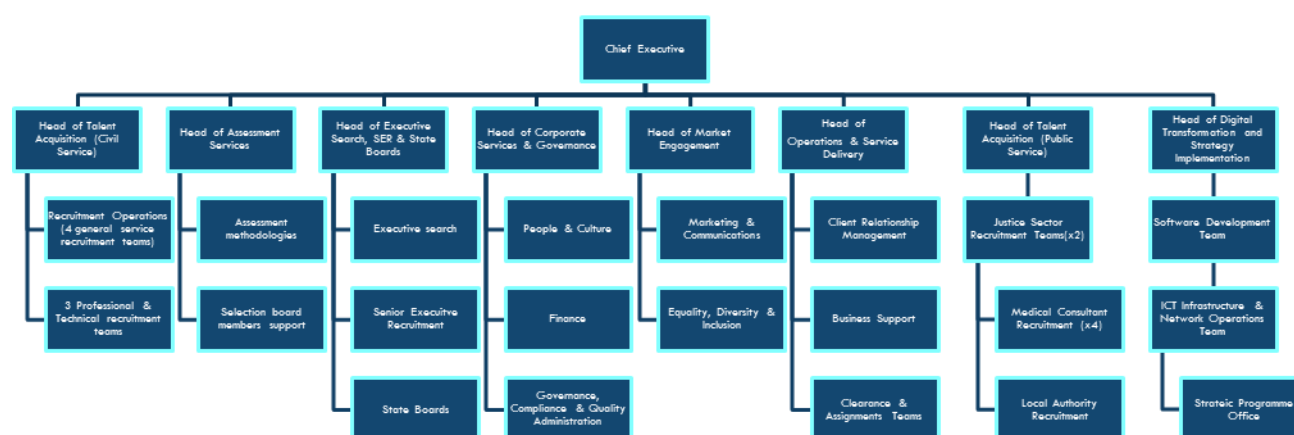
	<p>Lead the development, implementation, and evaluation of people strategies that support the Public Appointments Service to achieve our vision, mission, and strategic goals.</p> <p>Responsible for financial management and reporting, delivery of the Appropriation Account, managing the financial team and providing advice and support in relation to finance and procurement matters.</p>
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Organisation Structure

The Recruitment and Selection Services Unit (RSSU) carries out the core business functions. RSSU consists of recruitment teams and 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 organisation structure is shown below:



The Audit Committee

The membership of the Audit Committee during 2023 was as follows:

Mr Kevin Smyth (Chairperson) (1st Term commenced on 15th September 2022)

Ms Anne Marie Taylor, Public Appointments Service Board Member (2nd Term commenced on 29th May 2022)

Mr Noel O'Connell (1st term commenced on 15th September 2022)

Ms Louise Jevens (1st Term commenced on 1st October 2022)

Ms Valerie Bowens (1st Term commenced on 1st May 2023)

The Committee met on four occasions during 2023.

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 carried out in 2023.

The following four audit reports were carried out by the internal audit partners during 2023 and were presented to the Audit Committee:

- Asset Management
- Accounting and Reporting
- Clearance and Assignments Processes and Timescales
- Procurement

The Committee received a report on Internal Controls at their meeting in March. The report outlined the controls in place and incorporated a section which responded to guidance in the C&AG report regarding the impact of hybrid working on the control environment. The report was prepared for the Management Board and was brought to the attention of the Audit Committee and the Public Appointments Service Board, in order to provide assurance in relation to the internal controls in place. All Principal Officers were required to sign off on internal controls in their area and to identify areas for enhancement. The results of these questionnaires and all other aspects of internal controls were incorporated into the report. The report was also provided to C&AG and was used by the Accounting Officer for assurance to allow her to sign off on Statement of Internal Controls.

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 2023. It is discussed by the Management Board on a regular basis. The major risks facing the organisation at present are in the areas of meeting organisational objectives/client demands; receiving the required resourcing to provide all required services, 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 key risks.

Meeting organisational objectives and client expectations

We have a number of mitigations in place to address risks presented in this area, including the allocation of all available resources in a structured manner through the Resourcing Sub-Group of the Management Board, with additional resources being allocated to senior executive, professional & technical, and general service recruitment in order to improve the delivery timescales in these areas. The importance of effective workforce planning is being communicated to clients, and there is ongoing communication and engagement with clients through the CRM structures and client surveys. We now have greater visibility around delivery (through the Super 8) and we use this reporting framework and data to allocate resources and support delivery. Processes are being redesigned on an ongoing basis to deliver in the face of changes to both demand and supply, with a continuing focus on business process improvements, automation and standardisation. There is significant engagement at Board and Management Board level around service delivery.

Resourcing

On the December 31st, 2021, the staff headcount was 236.

All available resources are allocated in a structured manner in line with strategic objectives and a comprehensive business planning and resourcing business case process. Finance and Resourcing Management Board Sub-Groups were established to prioritise financial and human resource allocation. We have used a range of models including outsourcing, in-sourcing, use of temporary secondments, etc. to provide services and there is prioritisation of resources at Management Board level. A Capacity Review is also underway.

Schrems II

The risk associated with data transfers to the UK was monitored in line with UK political developments, and this risk was not increased during 2023. We welcomed the adoption of the EU-US Data Privacy Framework, while noting that both the Framework and the implementation of same came under significant criticism in 2023. To assist in identifying and mitigating against the risks associated with using Microsoft 365, A Data Protection Impact Assessment was carried out in 2023, which resulted in the recommendation that we should take significant care when determining the appropriate security and privacy settings to put in place when migrating to this new system. We continue to monitor the evolving situation in relation to International Data Transfers.

Protected Disclosure Act 2014 - 2022

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.

We signed up to the Transparency International Ireland (TII) Integrity and Work Programme and it was rolled out to staff. The programme includes access for staff to a “speak up” helpline and advice centre. It also includes TII working with us to implement an action plan to promote transparency in the workplace and support with the review of our Protected Disclosures Policy and procedures. Our Policy is available on our website. Training and awareness raising is also being provided as part of the membership.

Disclosures Summary

The organisation received five Protected Disclosures in 2023 (all from candidates), resulting in three investigations. No investigations resulted in a finding of any impropriety on the part of the organisation in 2023. In one case, the Disclosing Person escalated their report to the CPSA, and we are awaiting the outcome of that investigation.

Compliance with the Official Languages Acts 2003 - 2021

The current Irish Language Scheme covers the period 2017 to 2020 and will be observed until a Language Standard is put in place under the provisions of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. The current 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.

To ensure compliance with the Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 2021, and to prepare for the introduction of further provisions under this Act, we took the following steps in 2023:

- Ongoing engagement by our representative to the Irish Language Services Committee (Sinéad Coleman), to support the publication of a National Plan for the provision of Irish Language Services in the civil and public service by 2024;
- Meetings of our internal, cross-organisational Irish Language Group, to ensure compliance with the Act and to plan for the implementation of future provisions and associated measures;
- Further developed our working relationship with Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga/the Office of the Language Commissioner and Roinn na Gaeltachta;
- Provision of training for staff to support Irish Language proficiency;
- Expanded our Foireann na Gaeilge/the Irish-language team.

We will continue to take the appropriate measures to ensure compliance with language legislation, policy, and best practice.

Compliance with Circular 25/2016

This Circular outlines the Protocol for the Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies under the aegis of Government Departments/Offices.

The Public Appointments is required to provide and maintain a dedicated email address for Oireachtas members and notify/publicise this to Oireachtas members. This email address is oireachtasqueries@publicjobs.ie.

We intend to put in place formal feedback processes to obtain feedback from Oireachtas members by way of survey in 2024.

We aim to acknowledge queries in the day they are received but always within three working days. The acknowledgement includes contact details for the staff member dealing with the query. While the response time for a substantive reply is 15 working days, we aim to reply within 10 working days.

A person at senior management level has been designated with responsibility for ensuring the timely provision of information to members of the Oireachtas.

In the spirit of Open Government Partnership, we will publish the response to queries from members of the Oireachtas on our website where this is appropriate.

Sustainability & Energy Usage

A sustainability information session was held for all staff in 2023, this will be the first in an annual series and each year will look at different aspects of sustainability and what staff can do both at work and at home to combat climate change.

We installed upgrades to the building management systems which allow closer monitoring of heating/cooling of Chapter House both in the office and remotely. Upgrades have been installed to the building management systems to help monitor the heating and cooling of Chapter House, and potential further improvements will be investigated in 2024. Some upgrades introduced in 2023 include:

- The Air Conditioning System upgrade has been fully completed with all units now commissioned.
- LED light fittings have been fitted with presence sensors
- A Climate Action Roadmap was completed and submitted to the SEAI and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in September 2023.
- We worked closely with an Optimising Energy at Work consultant to further enhance energy saving measures in Chapter House. This will continue in 2024.
- Changes to external lighting and temperatures within Chapter House have occurred in line with Government Policy on Public Buildings. This has continued past the winter deadline and all outdoor lighting is shut off at 5pm. The guidelines for 19 degrees in Public Buildings was not mandated in Winter 2023 but we continue to actively monitor and adjust temperatures.
- An Environment and Social Governance team (ESG) was formed, which will help create the Public Appointments Service Sustainability Policy.
- A new Managed Print Services contract was implemented, helping reduce paper consumption across the Office.

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.

We utilise the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Frameworks where possible. Examples of frameworks now in place that meet the green criteria are for the provision of energy, laptops, printing services, courier services, cleaning services and recycling. Non-framework procurements are guided by the OGP's green criteria search tool.

We have established an Enviromental, Social and Governance Committee which will look at any additional measures we can take in this area in 2024.

Overview of Energy Usage in 2023

The main energy usage relates to heating/lighting and providing water in the office in Chapter House. It should be noted that this energy usage reflects the return of staff to Chapter House in 2023, following on from the completion of the refurbishment project. An increase

in energy usage was expected in 2023 to reflect this change in work practices. The energy usage breakdown for Chapter House in 2023 was as follows.

Electricity Usage: 376 MWh

Fossil Fuel Usage: 136 MWh

Total Usage 512 MWh

Financial Reporting

Our annual financial statements are independently audited by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG). The audited accounts each year are available at: [Appropriation Accounts - Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General](#). The Statement on Internal Controls sets out in detail the key control issues for the organisation.