



# Client Newsletter

Summer 2021



**An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí**  
**Public Appointments Service**

## WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

Welcome to the summer edition of our Client Newsletter, which aims to keep you informed of key updates and upcoming priorities across the Public Appointments Service.

As we emerge from the longest spell of lockdown, it is evident that the progress in the rollout of the vaccine has given real hope to the country and lifted all of our spirits. We recognise and are indebted to the commitment and sacrifice of our civil and public service colleagues on the front-line, who responded to the challenges of the pandemic over such a sustained period.

In this issue, we feature a spotlight on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I), which is pivotal to all of our work. A public service that is enriched by the contribution of employees from all sectors of society, supports the delivery of more responsive public services. As we navigate through the next period of defining the future of work, we hope that this will offer new opportunities to enhance our inclusivity. We look forward to collaborating with you on how best to support diversity and inclusion as we build our future workplace, which is central to the delivery of our ED&I strategy (2021-2023).

*Shirley Comerford*

**Chief Executive Officer  
Public Appointments Service**



## ORGANISATIONAL & CORPORATE UPDATES

### National Diversity and Inclusion Conference

We were delighted to recently support **#InclusionWorks2021**, Ireland's National Diversity and Inclusion Conference, which took place virtually on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Inclusion Works was delivered by the Irish Centre for Diversity and the DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion.

Siobhan McKenna, our Head of ED&I, was the MC for the event. We also sponsored one of the facilitated practitioner rooms that explored the theme of **'Attracting Diverse Talent into the Public Service'**. It was a well-attended and informative discussion that examined trends, barriers and opportunities on how inclusive recruitment practices can help to attract a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. The session also included practical guidance on initiatives in various jurisdictions that have helped achieve a more diverse public sector workforce.



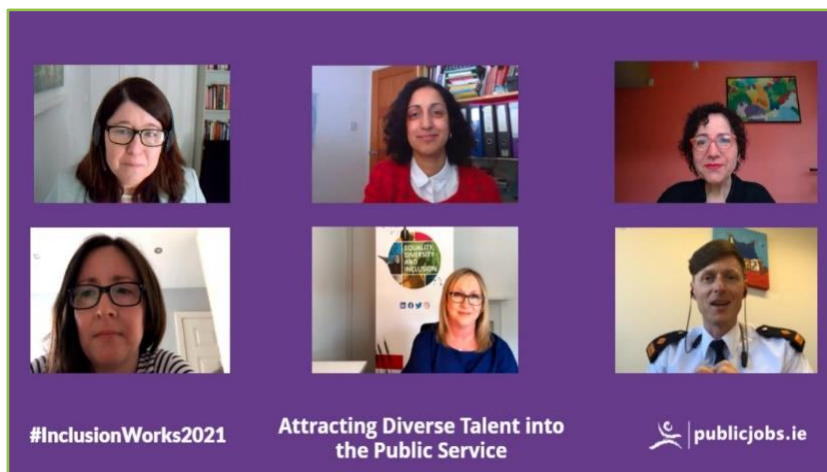
The session on **Attracting Diverse Talent into the Public Service** was facilitated by Sandra Healy, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Dublin City University. Alongside our CEO, Shirley Comerford, the speakers included:

**Charmaine de Souza**  
Assistant Director of HR & Organisational Development, Greater London Authority

**Yazmine La Roche**  
Deputy Minister, Public Service Accessibility, Government of Canada

**Karen Davis**  
Head of Talent Acquisition, ESB

**Paul Franey**  
Superintendent, An Garda Síochána



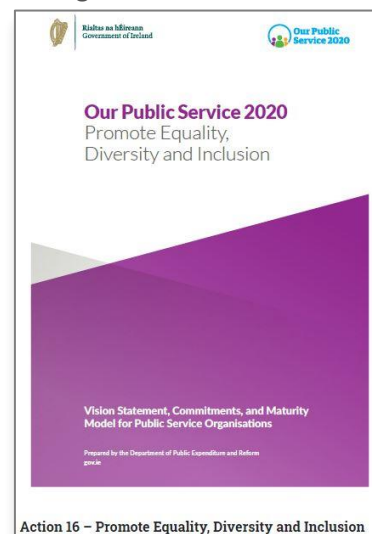
Other topics that were explored during the conference related to COVID-19 and inclusive working, race equality in the workplace and the gender pay gap.

## Launch of OPS Vision Statement & Maturity Model

On 24 May 2021, Our Public Service 2020 (OPS2020) launched a [Vision Statement and EDI Maturity-Model](#), which aims to support the public sector to progress their ED&I journey and accommodate the distinct challenges faced by organisations of differing size and functions.

The purpose of the **Vision Statement** is to support public sector organisations to articulate their commitment to ED&I and includes four overarching commitments to promote an inclusive working environment.

The **Maturity Model** builds on this and identifies the specific, interrelated components of a comprehensive approach to ED&I. Organisations can use the maturity model to reflect on their performance in areas such as inclusive leadership, diversity data, recruitment & selection, training & professional development and structures & culture. The Maturity Model can then be used to support the organisation's own ED&I journey.



Action 16 – Promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



## Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy

The **Civil Service Renewal 2030** is an ambitious ten-year strategy that was formally launched in May. The strategy is committed to excellence in service delivery and strategic policy development with a strong emphasis on ensuring that our responses are focused on equality, inclusivity and accessibility.

As part of the strategic priority **'Workplace and Organisation of the Future'**, there are several actions to foster workforce equality, diversity and inclusion that are strongly aligned with our own strategic priorities. The actions include the need to build an inclusive workforce that better reflects the diversity of modern Irish society and ensuring that equality and inclusivity are at the fore of our organisational design.

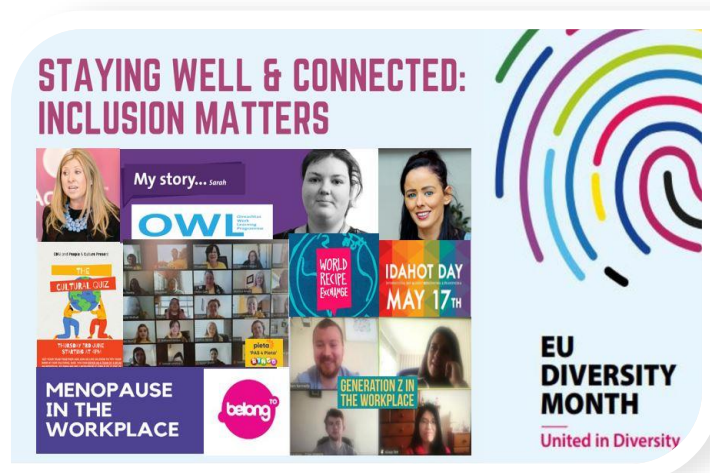
We look forward to collaborating with civil service colleagues to deliver on this ambition.



## Celebrating Diversity in the Public Appointments Service

Throughout May, we celebrated **EU Diversity month**. Inclusion is a core organisational value and our people are central to enabling inclusive recruitment practices and creating an inclusive working environment. We had fascinating conversations around diversity in recruitment, disability inclusion, intersectionality, gender & wellbeing, culture & ethnicity and LGBTQ+ inclusion.

We also held a 'fireside chat' with our very own OWL Graduate, Sarah McNulty, who spoke about her experience in the OWL training programme and as an employee in the Public Appointments Service. Sarah spoke about her current role in maintaining databases and working with People & Culture, and how she has grown in confidence and developed her skills since joining the Public Appointments Service.



As we roll out our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, we will continue to grow our ED&I capability working closely with our clients, candidates and workforce to promote the public service as an inclusive employer and a great place to work.

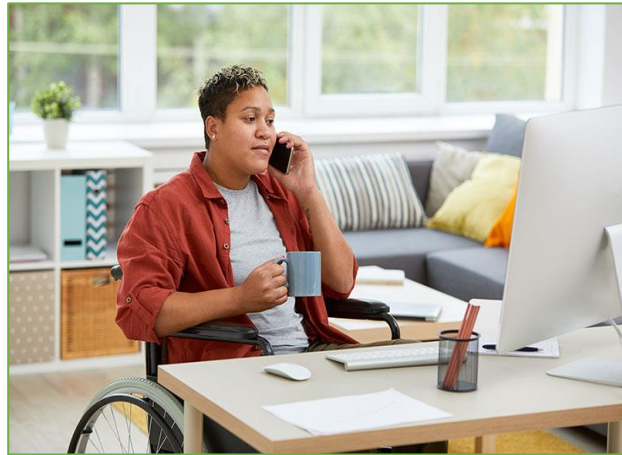




## RECRUITMENT UPDATES

### Reasonable Accommodations and the Assessment Process

The Assessment Services Unit (ASU), is made up of a team of Chartered Work and Organisational Psychologists who support the delivery of our recruitment process through the provision of robust assessments.



The team works in partnership with colleagues in Recruitment and ED&I to utilise **innovative approaches** that are informed by **evidence** and **best practice**, that also meet the stringent requirements in relation to openness, transparency, and fairness to all candidates. Within our assessment process, there is a strong focus on equality and diversity and the area of disability has been a key priority for many years.



OUR  
RECRUITMENT  
PROCESS



CIVIL SERVICE  
CAREER PATH



DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSION



ACCESSIBILITY

In line with the commitments contained in our NUA Strategy 2020-2023, we are continuously seeking to improve the candidate experience and increase the number of disabled people in the Civil and Public Service to reflect the diversity of Irish society. We continue to explore new ways of recruiting and selecting candidates with a disability and undertake regular reviews of the accommodations that we provide. Some of the **reasonable accommodations** that have **supported candidates** include the addition of extra time; the provision of a reader, scribe or sign language interpreter; the use of a screen reader or magnification software; facilitation of testing in a quiet room and, many more. An important principle that underpins our work is that **one size does not fit all** and the accommodations that a candidate requires must be assessed at the individual level.

The onset of the **COVID-19 pandemic** posed significant challenges to our work, and there was a critical need to consider and reassess reasonable accommodations in the context of the remote environment. To facilitate business continuity, the use of video interviewing (Zoom) and remote proctoring was put in place very promptly. It was also necessary to introduce a range of adaptations to the reasonable accommodations that we typically provide, to support



the participation of candidates with disabilities. It was quickly identified that the screen reader package most frequently used by our visually impaired candidates (JAWS), would not work in Zoom and we had to source a new supplier that had a platform compatible with JAWS.



For hearing-impaired candidates, we have utilised captioning at the video interview stage, as well as sign language interpreters. Candidates who have a speech impediment have been provided with the opportunity to type their answers and have an interpreter on hand for support.

Collaboration and exchange of relevant information is a key focus of our work, which facilitates learning opportunities. We work closely with colleagues from across Government Departments, as part of the **Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (2015-24)**, as well as colleagues from other jurisdictions (Europe, the UK and Canada) to explore innovations in relation to reasonable accommodations.

Our Assessment Services team has presented their research on candidates with disabilities at an international level and undertake benchmarking in this area. A member of the team is also represented on a large-scale HSE Disability Advisory Group chaired by Adam Harris from AsIAM, as an expert in the field of work and organisational psychology.

The Assessment Services team continues to expand on our **suite of e-Learning resources** that are available to clients. At the start of the year, we launched a module on 'Unconscious Bias', which has been very positively received. Our new Disability Awareness module is now available and provides further information on reasonable accommodations and key considerations in the assessment process – for further details, please see page 10.



## Successful Delivery

Since January 2021, we have successfully delivered the following outputs to our civil/public service clients (figures presented are up to the end of June 2021).

**230**  
New  
Campaigns  
Advertised

**11,637**  
Applications  
Received

**18,820**  
Assessments  
Conducted

**6,312**  
Remote  
Interviews  
Conducted

**165**  
Campaigns  
Completed /  
Panel in  
Place

**3,505**  
Candidates  
Assigned

## Upcoming Competitions for 2021

To better support your internal planning and resourcing strategies, we have provided an overview of our upcoming recruitment activity to Autumn 2021. The recruitment plan, outlined below, details the planned large volume competitions for generalist and professional and technical recruitment.

COMPETITION	PANEL EXPECTED
AP HR	Quarter 3
CO Irish	Quarter 3
Aistritheoir Grád 3	Quarter 3
Auditor HEO	Quarter 3
Please note that these are approximate dates and depending on numbers of applicants and capacity, these may be extended/pushed back	



## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION TEAM UPDATES:

### Joint Oireachtas Committee: Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community

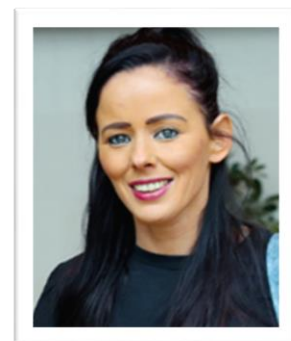
On 20 April 2021, the Public Appointments Service appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on 'Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community' to discuss our work to support Travellers into employment. Also contributing to the session were the Open Doors Initiative and the ESRI. In our opening statement, we acknowledged the important role that we play as public service recruiters and our commitment to equality of opportunity while iterating the unacceptable rates of Traveller unemployment and the need to proactively extend our outreach to enable greater participation.



The discussion with the Committee reinforced the need to actively work to **enhance opportunities for Traveller employment**. Key themes that were explored included: the need for greater understanding; positive action and alternative routes into the public service; enabling access for diverse candidates; building on targeted outreach work to ensure sufficient capacity among potential applicants, and the essential role of data in monitoring progress.

The Committee was informed that our recently launched ED&I strategy will provide a framework to address challenges and engender the systemic and sustainable change that is required. Our CEO highlighted that we were proud to sponsor the **Traveller Education Awards** for the first time in 2020 and aim to develop this as a long-term partnership to facilitate increased engagement. It was also noted that the Public Appointments Service will be supporting the **Traveller Internship programme** that has been developed by the Department of Justice, by delivering a civil service and public sector career module to interns. The full transcript of the Joint Oireachtas Committee meeting is available: [HERE](#)

Following the Joint Oireachtas Committee, we invited a number of speakers to present to our staff to further build our understanding of issues facing the Traveller community. **Senator Eileen Flynn**, chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee, spoke about her experience as a Traveller, both personally and professionally, in the context of recruitment, employment and inclusion, as well as her current public sector role. Senator Flynn also spoke about the barriers and challenges that Travellers may encounter in accessing employment and the importance of an inclusive workplace in the retention of marginalised groups. In addition, Fran McGinnity from the ESRI presented her recent research to our staff on diversity and inclusion in recruitment and employment. The session included a focus on underrepresented and marginalised groups, including the Traveller community, in the Irish labour market. The role of quotas and targets and the importance of including all equality grounds in data collection were also discussed. Both sessions provided rich insights and generated positive feedback from staff.





## Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme

The second cohort of OWL trainees will be graduating later this year, with a view to commencing employment shortly thereafter. The Public Appointments Service, along with the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, are **actively seeking employment** opportunities in the civil and public service for programme graduates.



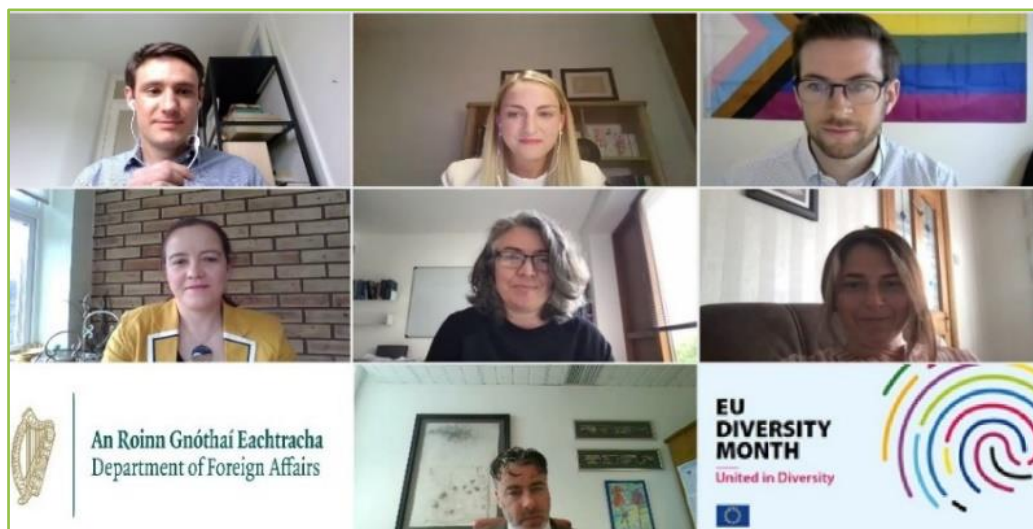
The recently launched [OWL Guide to Promoting Inclusive Employment](#) was developed by the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Public Appointments Service, based on our experience as OWL employers. It contains practical information on what reasonable accommodations mean in practice and includes relevant information for employers. It also draws on the lived experience of people with an intellectual disability – the graduate voice comes through in their own reflections on accessing employment.

For more information on becoming an OWL employer, or to discuss the potential support your organisation can provide, please contact: [owl@oireachtas.ie](mailto:owl@oireachtas.ie)

## Supporting Socio-Economic Inclusion

On 20 May 2021, as part of EU Diversity Month, we participated in a panel discussion on **socio-economic inclusion**, with Senator Lynn Ruane and Judy Walsh, UCD School of Social Policy – the session focused on what social inclusion is and how to support it.

We outlined how our new ED&I strategy will enable participation in recruitment across the diversity spectrum, and our plans to collaborate with clients to promote inclusive work environments.



It was an engaging and interactive panel, with audience questions on how to build visible diversity into recruitment, how to ensure retention of diversity, the role of mentoring and positive action, and the potential to engage with young people through the education curriculum.



## Celebrating Africa Day



To celebrate Africa Day, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) hosted an event on ‘**Recruiting Diverse Talents of African Descent for Public Jobs**’ on 27 May 2021.

This session was opened by Roderic O’Gorman T.D., Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and focused on the recruitment of diverse talent into public sector roles, in particular targeting Ireland’s African communities and people of African descent. The event was moderated by Winifred Ikhine Akinyemi from DFA’s Africa unit.

As part of the session, our recruitment and ED&I teams provided input on the key priorities of our ED&I strategy and also the role of publicjobs.ie. The event also had an important emphasis on amplifying the personal experience of the African Irish in the civil service, with speakers from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Justice and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

There was positive feedback from attendees, who reported a greater understanding of the accessibility and breadth of public sector career opportunities. Thanks to our colleagues in DFA for organising this event and inviting us to participate.

## Willing, Able, Mentoring (WAM)

Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) is a work placement programme that aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace. The recent WAM campaign concluded in May 2021 and a panel has now been established.

The diversification of our selection boards is a key priority in our ED&I strategy - this year, **disabled people comprised 60% of the board members who participated in WAM recruitment.** Feedback on this year’s selection boards has been universally positive from both candidates and Public Appointments Service representatives.

If you are interested in employing a WAM graduate, please check out this [video](#) and a useful list of [FAQs](#).



## CLIENT INFORMATION & RESOURCES:

### Launch of new Disability Awareness eLearning module

We are committed to sharing our knowledge and expertise, to support our clients to achieve excellence in service delivery. As part of this role, we have developed an eLearning programme that is available to clients and provides a range of interactive modules on how to develop a recruitment and selection process that is informed by best practices.

We are delighted to launch a new **Disability Awareness** module to our suite of eLearning. The aim of this module is to support our client organisations on the appropriate approach when assessing and interviewing people with disabilities, both in person and in a remote environment.



The module covers key areas that have been informed by candidates and Board Members including facilities, adaptive technology, timing considerations and language/terminology. The inputs will enable you to:

- Demonstrate disability awareness, informed by an understanding of legislation, research and best practice.
- Understand how to positively support candidates who share information about a disability.

The launch of our suite of eLearning modules last year has been very positively received, with approx. **353 people** from **64 organisations** signing up for the current modules. For further details on how to access the modules, please contact [CRMMailbox@publicjobs.ie](mailto:CRMMailbox@publicjobs.ie).

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

We are here to support you - as we are currently working remotely, please contact the CRM team on:

- **Civil and Public Service:** [CRMMailbox@publicjobs.ie](mailto:CRMMailbox@publicjobs.ie)
- **Health Service Executive:** [HSERecruitment@publicjobs.ie](mailto:HSERecruitment@publicjobs.ie)

Should you wish to discuss a query over the telephone, you will find our contact details on each team members email signature.

You can also keep up to date on [publicjobs.ie](http://publicjobs.ie) and [stateboards.ie](http://stateboards.ie) and follow us on our social platforms:



CRM have responded to 10,632 client queries in 2021

On average 80% of queries are answered on the same day

