

# Candidate Information Booklet Head of Policy and Innovation

December 2020



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# Sport NI CEO: Welcome to Sport NI

Firstly, I am delighted that you are sufficiently interested in working in Sport NI to access this candidate booklet.

Sport NI is on a journey of transformation that has resulted in significant changes to culture, strategy and structure, culminating in the appointment of four new Executive leaders. We have listened closely to what our Governing Bodies of sport, our partners and stakeholders have told us is needed of us to support them to thrive.

Sport NI's transformation process began with culture; Sport NI has learnt of the critical role of a strong organisational culture that sets clear standards and expectations of us all. We have invested energy and commitment into defining a culture that reflects that of a high performing sports team and enables us to demand of ourselves what we demand of our best athletes. We aspire to developing leaders at all levels of the organisation, supported by a strong DNA, including values of excellence, integrity, teamwork and clear behaviours that enables all of us to be held accountable by colleagues and customers.

Our DNA has informed the development of a new five year strategy for sport, the second element of transformation. Our new draft Corporate Plan is driven by a strong and positive sporting culture that sets the tone of well-being in sport and respect for the voices of all involved. We are now at the stage in transformation of appointing to a new staffing structure and the appointment of four new Executive Leadership posts.

I am incredibly proud to lead a team of committed staff, many of whom are directly involved in sport in their own communities, as athletes, coaches, volunteers, administrators and leaders. There is a drive to achieve the best we can and during COVID-19 our staff have consistently stepped up to meet the challenges of supporting the sector. These new posts provide an exciting, challenging and rewarding opportunity for people with the same passion for sport and/or excellence in public service provision to join a highly motivated family in Sport NI.

Our transformation will complete with the fourth and final stage of change, which is system, process and digital transformation; this work has already begun and will support a world class approach to delivering and developing sport in NI.

I would encourage you to join us on a journey that aspires to excellence through innovation and insight, learning and growth and one that puts equality and inclusion at the heart of everything we do.



Antoinette McKeown, CEO of Sport NI

# About Sport NI

Sport NI is the lead development public body for sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland. We are established under the Recreation and Youth Service Order 1986 and we provide a range of support services to the sport sector, ranging from direct financial investment and thought leadership resources to training sports coaches and leaders to specialist sport science provision to sports and athletes. We are an Arms Length Body of the Department for Communities.

Sport Northern Ireland is based at the House of Sport in Belfast, and operates a National Outdoor Training Centre at the base of the Mourne Mountains – Tollymore National Outdoor Centre. Sport Northern Ireland also manage Sport Northern Ireland's Sports Institute (SNISI), which is the High Performance Arm of Sport Northern Ireland based at the Jordanstown campus of the University of Ulster. SINI prepares Northern Ireland's best athletes to perform on the world stage by providing an environment that nurtures elite athletes and coaches.

Our annual budget reflects a total investment of £20m. This includes a mix of Exchequer and National Lottery resources, as Sport NI is a national lottery funds distributor.

In Sport NI we are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives and we work with a range of strategic partners and other stakeholders to deliver our goals. Our work is directly aligned to supporting the Programme for Government and New Decade New Approach. We are also working with our Department for Communities to develop a new strategy for sport and physical activity in NI, reflecting an exciting time for policy and strategy in sport here.

## Sport NI's Strategy for Sport – Corporate Plan 2020-25

Our new Corporate Plan (currently out for public consultation – link [here](#)) aims to provide the leadership and support which the changing sports sector in NI requires, working with communities to ensure people adopt and sustain participation in sport and working uniquely across two jurisdictions (UK and Ireland) to ensure that our athletes are amongst the best in the world.

The sports sector has also grown considerably in recent years, with many more sports having a professional staffing structure and high performance and participation strategies that have supported real growth. Sport NI will continue to add value to a strong sporting family which puts people – participants, athletes, teams, coaches, volunteers and leaders – at the heart of what we do.

Supporting a more professionalised sporting sector and a diverse range of governing bodies at many different stages of development, the Corporate Plan makes a clear commitment to the co-design, with governing bodies, other partners and stakeholders, of a sporting culture and system that is right for Northern Ireland now. We also aim to support this work with the right human resources and world class services, systems, knowledge and insight to enable us to deliver what the sector demands of us in the dynamic and rapidly evolving environment that is sport.



Jason Smyth of Ireland competing in the Men's 100m at the 2019 Morton Games



# Sport NI's Executive Leadership Team



To implement our strategy and continue a journey of transformation, Sport NI aims to develop a highly performing organisation reflecting the standards expected of our high performing athletes and sports. As part of an organisational review and staff restructure we are now in a position to appoint **four new Executive Leadership posts**.

This new executive leadership team will maximise, motivate, inspire and lead a team of staff across three sites in Northern Ireland with considerable expertise in commitment to, and passion for, sport. This Leadership

Team will drive excellence in sport through informed strategies and programmes which meet sporting need and help to transform people, communities and public services so that we can all maximise the power of sport to change lives. These new posts are critical to the future success of Sport NI and sport in Northern Ireland and provide an exciting, challenging and rewarding opportunity for people with a passion for sport, and/or excellence in public service provision.

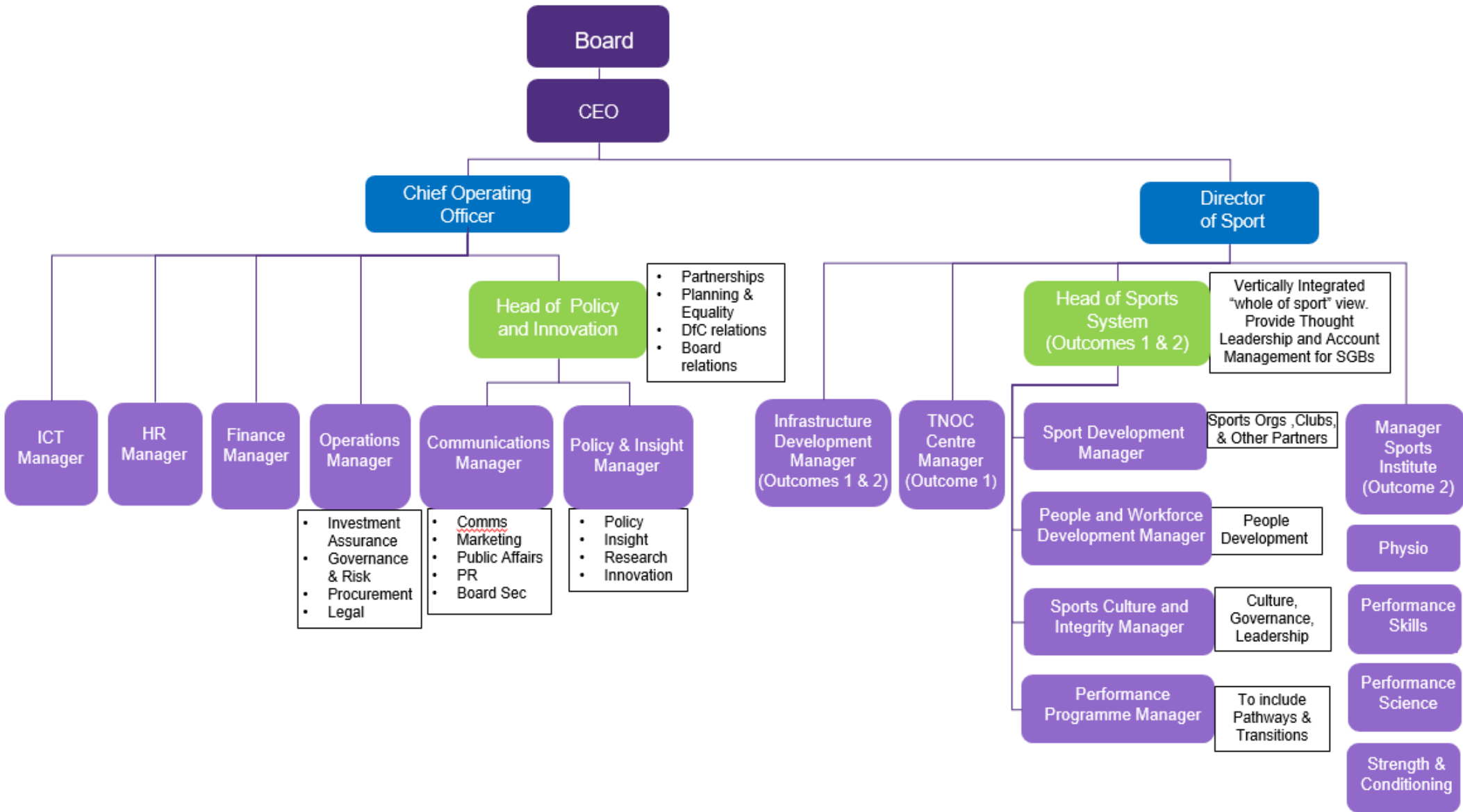
**Director of Sport** - This is a key role within the structure with responsibility for delivery of an integrated sporting development strategy ranging from increasing participation in quality sport and physical recreation to oversight of Sport NI's high performance services and support. The post-holder will operate at a strategic level with NGBs as the recognised technical sports lead for Sport NI, driving the continuous development of sport at all levels within a complex environment of competing priorities and need. They will lead the Sports Development Division, focusing on the development, commissioning and delivery of strategies, programmes and facilities to meet sporting need and drive innovation and excellence. They will also provide technical sport planning, performance and management advice to the CEO, Board and Executive team within Sport NI.

**Chief Operating Officer (COO)** - The COO role brings together all Operations functions into a Centre of Expertise, ensuring an integrated and responsive support service that supports sporting excellence and exemplar public sector governance practice. This role will be responsible for bringing together key support functions with world class capabilities and technology. The role holder will also be responsible for overseeing strong sport policy and insight work, strategic planning and partnerships, communications and public affairs and governance and risk. Key tasks will include reducing bureaucracy and using lean methodologies to streamline processes and systems, and delivering an effective advocacy service for Sport NI.

**Head of Sport System** - The purpose of the role is to work with NI sports to support the development and implementation of a holistic sporting system relevant to NI. The post-holder will work with Governing Bodies (both regional and national) and other partners at a strategic level to agree, deploy, and monitor effective Sport NI resource interventions (human and financial) to achieve agreed outcomes. A key activity will be in the delivery of a 'Single view of Sport' model, ensuring that governing bodies of sport are supported across the sporting system to meet their development needs. They will also work with the other leads internally within the Sports Directorate to maximise and mobilise resources and expertise from within their teams (and externally) to support ongoing development of quality sport and physical recreation

**Head of Policy & Innovation** - This role will have overall responsibility for leading and promoting Sport NI’s policy and knowledge functions as a key influencer in innovative sport development. This includes directing and managing the organisation’s research and insight, strategic planning and partnerships, communications and public affairs and statutory equality duties. This Head of Policy and Innovation will be critical in building the unique capability of Sport NI in evidenced-based decision making, and in ‘telling the story’ to stakeholders in Government, National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Councils and in the wider public. The Head of Policy & Innovation will also have key responsibilities in developing Sport NI’s approach to strategic Partnerships and Planning and Equality as well as managing Departmental relations and the Board Secretariat. The role holder will work closely with the Head of Sport Systems to ensure that system development is evidenced based, innovative, future focused and achieves support from the sports sector.

## Sport NI’s New Organisation Structure



# Job Description

<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy & Innovation		<b>Ref:</b> HPI/1220
<b>Grade:</b> 7	<b>Salary Scale:</b> £49,806 - £54,588	
<b>Department:</b> Operations Directorate	<b>Location:</b> House of Sport, Belfast	
<b>Responsible to:</b> COO	<b>Duration:</b> Permanent	
<p><b>Organisational background:</b></p> <p>Sport NI is the lead development public body for sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland. We are established under the Recreation and Youth Service Order 1986 for the furtherance of sport and physical recreation In Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Sport NI is the main statutory body, through which public funding for sports in Northern Ireland is channelled. Sport NI is primarily funded by grant in aid from the Department for Communities and the National Lottery.</p> <p><b>Our mission statement is:</b></p> <p>We are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2025, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all.</p>		
<p><b>Overall purpose of job:</b></p> <p>Sport NI’s values are excellence, integrity, collaboration and learning. Sport NI seeks an individual who can share and embody these values.</p> <p>This role is a key report to the COO and will have overall responsibility for leading and promoting Sport NI’s policy and knowledge functions as a key influencer in innovative sport development. This includes directing and managing the organisation’s research and insight, strategic planning and partnerships, communications and public affairs and our statutory equality duties</p> <p>The role holder will have four direct reports at Deputy Principal level who will focus on workforce development for the sector including Performance Pathways and Transitions, as well as leading Culture, Governance and Leadership Development within the NGBs. These roles will be critical in building the unique capability of Sport NI in evidenced based decision making, and in ‘telling the story’ to stakeholders in Government, National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Councils and in the wider public.</p> <p>The Head of Policy &amp; Innovation will also have key responsibilities in developing Sport NI’s approach to strategic Partnerships and Planning and Equality as well as managing Departmental relations and the Board Secretariat. The role holder will work closely with the Head of Sport Systems to ensure that system development is evidenced based, innovative, future focussed and achieves support from the sports sector.</p>		

**Duties and Responsibilities:**

- Serves as a member of the Executive Team providing the key strategic executive leadership and management of Sport NI.
- Responsible for building a Policy and Insights unit and strategy with the brief of providing leading edge thinking and innovation across the organisation identifying emerging themes in sports development based on global best practice and a strong evidence base for use in policy development.
- The role holder will work closely with the Head of Sport System to ensure that system development is evidenced based, innovative, future focussed and achieves support from the sports sector.
- Responsibility for strategic Planning, including our statutory Equality duties, reviewing organisational performance against key measures through diverse empirical sources of data.
- Lead the development and implementation of a stakeholder strategy for Sport NI, overseeing the preparation of briefings for the Chair and CEO ahead of meetings with Ministers, MPs, civil servants and stakeholders.
- Develop strategic relationships with key Sport NI stakeholders, including the Department for Communities, Councils, NI Government, Governing bodies of sport etc. to raise the profile and credibility of Sport NI as the lead development body for sport in NI, acting as an Ambassador for our unique knowledge.
- Supporting the CEO in oversight and management of Board relations, managing the Board Secretariat to ensure that Board governance, effectiveness and protocols are implemented.
- Lead, direct and manage Sport NI's communications functions, ensuring effective integration of policy and communications so that the compelling value of sport is recognised by all. In particular to build a strong Communications hub with key competence in PR, Marketing, digital and social media skills.

**Key Interactions**

Key interactions internally will be with the CEO, COO, the Director of Sport, the Head of Sport System, and with Senior Managers across the organisation. Externally the role will interact with Key Stakeholders of Sport NI at Senior Civil Servant and equivalent levels, including NGBs, Councils, Department for Communities and at Government. The role holder will require strong negotiation and communication skills with the ability to influence at senior level internally and externally.

**Decision Making**

Decision making in the role will cover a wide variety of specialist areas with significant complexity and ambiguity. Decisions will cover key areas such as organisational policy development, communications, PR, public affairs and marketing strategy, as well as budgetary management.

**Autonomy**

The role holder will be guided by professional standards and appropriate governance rules, but will require significant judgement and discretion within complex multi-disciplined technical situations



# Person Specification

**Job Title:** Head of Policy & Innovation

## **Essential Criteria**

- Honours Degree or equivalent qualification in Public Policy and Public Affairs, Communications, Marketing or a similar relevant discipline

### **AND**

- At least 3-years' full time (or equivalent) experience in a management role (DP or similar) with responsibility for policy and public affairs, PR, and/or communications

### **OR**

- At least 5 years full time (or equivalent) experience in a management role (DP or similar) with responsibility for policy and public affairs, PR, and/or communications in a complex organisation.
- Extensive experience in public affairs and public policy at a national level and good understanding of the workings of the NI Assembly and /Government.
- Experience in the production of draft reports and responses, including to Government and senior persons in non-departmental public bodies.
- Ability to build relationships and rapport.
- Works collaboratively with senior colleagues and internal/external stakeholders.
- Excellent written and oral communication.
- Ability to create information relevant to different audiences and to formulate & negotiate changes & new initiatives within organisational structures.
- Political sensitivity and a demonstrable ability to recognise, influence and manage the communications and public relations consequences of sensitive issues.
- Proven track record of successfully managing staff and budgets.
- Ability to understand and analyse basic statistical information such as sport performance measures.

## **Desirable Criteria**

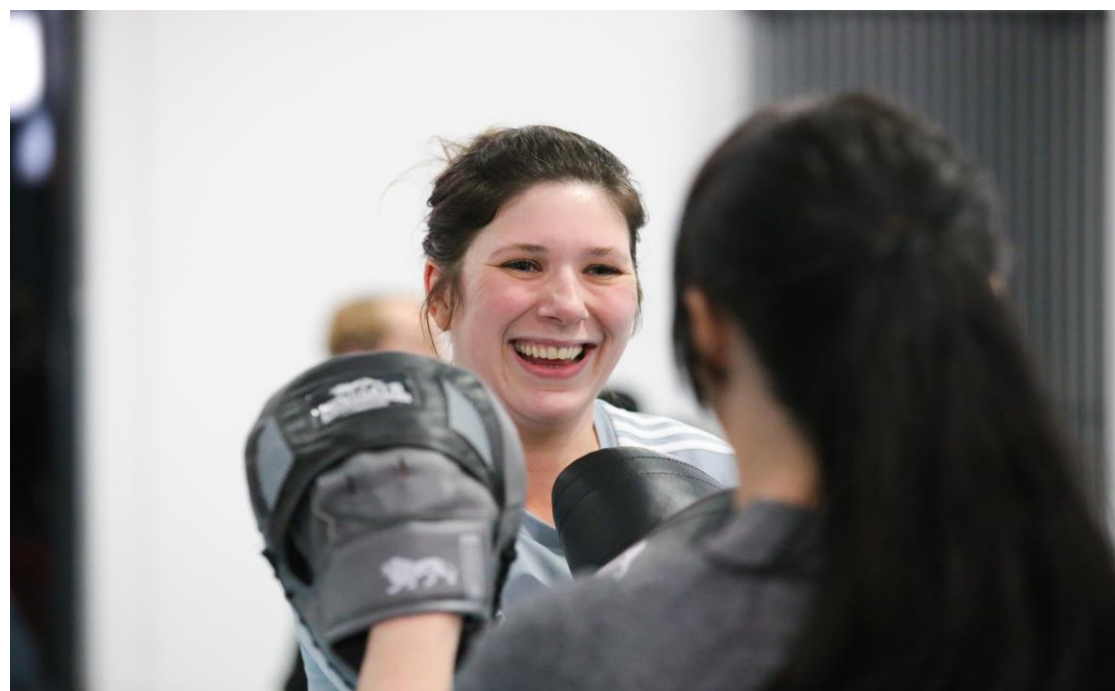
- Master's Degree or equivalent qualification in Public Policy and Public Affairs, Communications, Marketing or a similar relevant discipline.
- Demonstrable experience of successfully delivering high profile research and/or innovation projects.
- Demonstrable experience of implementing successful initiatives to deliver significant cultural and/or organisational change to improve operational performance.
- Able to prioritise work and work to tight deadlines.

# Terms and Conditions

This role is a permanent appointment. As an Arm's Length Body our pay scales are analogous to those of the NI Civil Service (NICS).

## Location

The post-holder will be based at the House of Sport, Upper Malone Road, Belfast and will also be expected to work at other Sport NI sites as required.



## Travel

The successful applicant will be required to travel on official duty throughout Northern Ireland and occasionally to Ireland and Great Britain. The post-holder must have access to a form of transport which will enable them to fulfil their responsibilities.

## Salary

Salary will be within the range **£49,806 - £54,588** within which pay progression will be performance related.

The successful candidate can expect to be placed at the minimum point of the pay scale, although a higher starting salary within the range may be available if he/she has exceptionally relevant skills/experience.

## Pension

Sport NI offers staff membership of the NILGOSC Pension Scheme. Details can be found at the NILGOSC website [here](#)

## Holidays

In addition to public holidays, currently 12.5 days, the annual leave allowance will be 25 days rising to 30 days after 5 years' service.

## Hours of Work

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 37 hours net per week including 0830 to 1700 Monday to Friday. As an Executive post the post-holder may be required to work outside their normal conditioned hours, where necessary, to fulfil the demands of the post.

## Probation

Confirmation of appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 6 months. If performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory the appointment may be terminated.



# Application and Selection Process

## Introduction

Sport NI will carry out a three stage application and selection process for this role which will include the following:

- Stage 1: Shortlist for essential skills and experience and competencies using the application form. Candidates who fail to meet the essential and/or desirable criteria will be rejected at this stage.
- Stage 2: Competency-based interview by a suitable interview panel
- Stage 3: Assessment Centre including a psychometric assessment, a presentation, and a further interview

It is noted that restrictions in place in relation to COVID-19 may restrict Sport NI's ability to conduct the selection process for this role face to face as we would prefer to do. If this is necessary, we will seek to utilise technology (such as Zoom) to facilitate interviews and other selection events.

## Competencies

The Sport NI competency framework can be downloaded from the Sport NI Website. These competencies will be used throughout the selection process including as the basis for competency-based questions at interview and at assessment centre

## Application Form

Sport NI requests that all applicants complete an application form when applying for a vacancy and a CV will not be considered. Application form for the role can be downloaded from the Sport NI Website and requests for an application form may be made via email to [recruitment@sportni.net](mailto:recruitment@sportni.net) Alternative forms of applications such as Braille or audio can be made available if required.

The application form includes a section on reasonable adjustments in order to give applicants an opportunity at an early stage to indicate any relevant effects of a disability and to suggest adjustments which might help them to overcome any disadvantage they might encounter in the recruitment and selection process. Candidates should note that Sport NI is committed to ensuring that all applications will be considered equally.

The closing date is 5pm on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and Application forms received after the closing date will not be considered.

## Shortlisting

Sport NI will form a suitably qualified and independent selection panel for the role. The panel will use only information contained on the application form for shortlisting purposes and will not make assumptions about qualifications or experience.



Sport NI will shortlist candidates who meet the essential criteria required for the role. Should there be excessive numbers of applicants for the role, Sport NI reserves the right to use desirable criteria in shortlisting.

As soon as possible after the shortlisting, the HR Department will notify each applicant of the result. Shortlisted candidates will be called to the next stage of the process - an interview. Any applicant who is not shortlisted and wishes to know the reason why will be advised to write to the HR Department and an explanation will be provided as to which of the criteria the applicant did not meet.

## **Interview**

The selection panel will convene to interview shortlisted candidates. Questions will be based on competencies outlined in the Sport NI Competency Framework and the content of the job description, and will test the skills and competencies required in the person specification.

Candidates may be deselected at this stage of the process, and if so the HR Department will notify any unsuccessful applicants of this result. Any deselected applicant who wishes to know the reason why will be advised to write to the HR Department and an explanation will be provided as to which of the criteria the applicant did not meet.

## **Assessment Centre**

The final stage of selection process will be as assessment centre. This will include the following exercises:

- Completing an online psychometric assessment relative to the Sport NI competencies required for the role
- Prepare and give a short presentation to the Panel on a topic notified to the candidate on the day. Sufficient preparation time will be given, and the candidate should be prepared to answer questions on their presentation afterward
- A further competency-based interview

## **Feedback**

Meaningful feedback in alternative formats will be provided to candidates on request. To protect the confidentiality of a candidate's application, requests for feedback from candidates should be in writing.

Factual information should be provided to the candidate in writing, in the format requested, drawing upon the documentation held on the selection panel's deliberations and taking account particularly of the selection and assessment criteria specified for the post(s) in question. Depending on what the candidate wishes to know, we may include the following information:

- the candidate's interview score and his/her position in the order of merit;
- the number of vacancies declared / filled.

If at any time after the interview a candidate seeks a feedback interview with a member of the selection panel to discuss his/her performance, the policy is to decline such requests and instead to seek to deal with any concerns in writing. ALL feedback must be managed by Sport NI HR and will only be provided following requests from candidates.

## **References and Pre-employment checks**

All applicants will be asked to nominate two referees on their application form, including their current/most recent employer. Where the applicant has previous working experience, it is essential that at least one of the referees has prior knowledge of the applicant's recent work and is in a managerial position relative to the applicant.

References will not be used as a means of deciding between candidates who appear from assessment to be equally matched as this relies on the subjective opinion of a referee rather than the performance of the candidates at interview.

The successful candidate must go through an ACCESS NI check as standard.

If a candidate is under consideration for a post in an 'excepted' category of employment (for example, Accountant), a criminal record check must be carried out. Where a post has been short-listed on the basis of qualifications, candidates must provide evidence that they hold these qualifications, before any appointment can be confirmed.