# Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and How to raise a complaint

CPANI
The Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland

**Thank you for your interest in this appointment.**

Public bodies have an important role to play in the lives of everyone. Among other things, they help run our health and social care services, arrange our education services and provide a wide range of social, economic, cultural and environmental services. Appointments to boards of public bodies are commonly known as public appointments.

Public appointments are made by individual Government Ministers. If you decide to apply for a public appointment the administration of your application will be handled by civil servants in the relevant Department. The Commissioner regulates the selection process but is not involved in individual competitions.

Departments must follow the 'Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Northern Ireland', to ensure that appointments are made on merit, after fair and open competition. The Code of Practice covers Ministerial appointments to a wide range of boards and public bodies. A full list can be found on the CPANI website at www.publicappointmentsni.org. The Code of Practice is also there.

**Making a Complaint**

If you apply for a public appointment, and you feel you have not been treated correctly, you may make a complaint.

The Commissioner is responsible for investigating complaints about public appointments. The Commissioner will look at the process used to make an appointment and the way an application was handled.

You should first raise your concerns with the relevant Department. If, after you have received a reply, you still feel you have not been treated correctly, you should contact CPANI using the contact details below.

Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland
Annexe B - Dundonald House
Stormont Estate
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3SB
Tel: 028 905 24820
Email: info@publicappointmentsni.org

**Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and How to raise a complaint.**

**Guidance on Conflicts of Interest and Integrity**

As part of the assessment process for a public appointment, you will be asked if you know of any possible conflicts of interest in connection with that appointment. Conflicts of interest are not always a barrier to appointment. However, all perceived, potential and real conflicts must be explored by the selection panel to ensure that the public can have confidence in the Board's independence and impartiality and in your position on that Board.

To give you an idea of what might constitute a conflict of interest here are a few examples of areas which could lead to a conflict of interest.

- You are the director of a building firm and the Board to which you are seeking appointment conducts regular procurement exercises for building materials. You could benefit personally from decisions taken by the Board.
- You are a manager in a voluntary organisation, whose funding applications are considered by the Board to which you are seeking appointment. The body for which you work could benefit financially from decisions taken by the Board.
- You have, in the past, contributed or lent significant funds to the political party to which the appointing Minister belongs. Your appointment could be viewed as a reward for past favours.

These are examples only. Please remember that identifying a conflict will not necessarily stop you being appointed. You should consider carefully your own circumstances to decide whether or not a perceived, potential or real conflict exists and be ready to discuss it with the Selection Panel at interview.

Even if you have not identified any conflicts of interest when applying for the post, you will still be asked about the issue if you are interviewed.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) has produced a good practice guide to conflicts of interest. This can be found on the NIAO website at www.niauditoffice.gov.uk

**Integrity**

Anyone applying for a public appointment must understand and be committed to the principle of integrity. You will be asked about this at interview.

**Feedback**

You may request feedback on the outcome of your application from the Department running this public appointment competition. This application pack contains relevant contact details. Feedback can be delivered in writing, by e-mail or by phone. It is up to you. It should be useful, jargon-free and based on the assessment of the selection panel. Please see paragraphs 3.48 and 3.49 of the Code of Practice.