

RESTRICTED - POLICY.

**Office of the First Minister and  
Deputy First Minister**

**Departmental Profile**

**First Working Draft  
29 January 1999**

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## 1. Role of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

- 1.1 The Executive authority of the Assembly will be discharged by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and ten Ministers with Departmental responsibilities. The Executive Committee will be convened and presided over by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister whose duties will include, inter alia, reaching a consensus on the overall strategic policy and programme direction of the new Administration in relation to all major social, economic and cultural issues; co-ordinating the work of the various Departmental Ministers to ensure that the activity of the new Administration has a coherence; and taking the lead in responding to the new Administration to external relationships.

## 2. Establishment of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

- 2.1 The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister derives from the Belfast Agreement, the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the determination of Ministerial offices and functions [agreed by the New Northern Ireland Assembly on 15 February 1999].

## 3. Overall Aim of the Office

- 3.1 The overall aim of the Office is to support the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in their roles of providing effective leadership, co-ordination and strategic policy direction within the competency of the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly, by providing the best possible information, policy advice and administrative assistance on a range of matters from negotiating a Programme for Government with an agreed budget, policy and programme formulation and innovation, through to decision-making, implementation and evaluating the overall performance of the new Administration.

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## 4. Role of the Office

- 4.1 The Multi-Party Agreement provides a new beginning for the people of Northern Ireland. The various institutional arrangements deriving from the Agreement represent a novel approach to a range of complex and protracted issues at the heart of community tensions and divisions in Northern Ireland. Likewise, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is a novel response to the new political environment. It is envisaged that the role of the Office will evolve and be refined over time in response to political and administrative developments.
- 4.2 In addition to the core areas of responsibility normally located at the centre of an administration, such as Central Secretariat and Information Services, the Office will assume responsibility for a range of institutional arrangements arising from the Agreement, such as the North/South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council; specifically oversee all matters related to Equality across the Administration as a whole and provide an Economic Policy Unit as a strategic support mechanism for the formulation, co-ordination, implementation and evaluation of the performance of the new Administration.
- 4.3 The role of the Office therefore reflects a combination of a number of distinct but complementary areas of responsibility which fall into 4 broad categories:
- i. The Functioning of the Executive
    - Executive Committee Secretariat
    - Central Secretariat
    - Executive Information Services
    - Office of Legislative Counsel
  - ii. Policy Direction and Co-ordination
    - Economic Policy Unit

- Policy Innovation Unit
- Programme for Government

iii. Significant Policy Areas

- Equality Unit
- Community Relations Unit
- Comprehensive Review of Public Administration in NI

iv. Arrangements Arising from the Agreement

- Liaison with the Secretary of State (NIO) on 'reserved' and 'excepted' matters
- Liaison with the North/South Ministerial Council
- Liaison with the British-Irish Council
- Facilitation of the consultative Civic Forum

4.4 Outlined below are brief descriptions of the core functions of the Office

## 5. The Functioning of the Executive Committee

5.1 Executive Secretariat: Assisting the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Executive Committee as a whole to reach collective decisions on the policy priorities of the new Administration and to take forward the agreed policy agenda; preparing the Executive's agenda, keeping the Executive's minutes, transmitting the Executive's decisions to Departments and monitoring their implementation; acting as a 'clearing house' for inter-Departmental communications; assisting the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service on all matters affecting the machinery of government; ensuring propriety and accountability; and managing external relationships.

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.2 **Central Secretariat:** Fulfilling a key role in the initiation and co-ordination of strategic cross-departmental initiatives. The functions within Central Secretariat will include:

- **Progress of Legislation** – preparing the legislative programme. Monitoring and providing advice to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Departmental Ministers and the Head of the NICS on the progress of the programme. Advice and guidance to Departments on legislative issues, procedures etc. Liaison with the Parliamentary Section of the Northern Ireland Office.
- **Machinery of the Administration** – providing advice and guidance to Departments on the business and machinery of the Administration, in particular contacts with political parties; handling of Ministerial correspondence; arranging meetings etc; distribution of papers to Assembly members and others; evidence and responses to Committees and Access to Government (Open Government Code of Practice) and Freedom of Information.
- **Other Co-ordination** – co-ordination and provision of advice to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Departmental Ministers and the Head of the NICS on Private Office cases, briefing and speeches; co-ordination of responses to Assembly Questions for which there is no lead Department; advice to Departments on handling Assembly Questions; providing economic and social briefing for visitors to Northern Ireland; and the Departmental Records Officer function for Central Secretariat.
- **Personnel and Finance Support** – “internal” support services provided to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister; oversight of the Private Offices; management of the messenger and typing services; management of the office’s budget including processing and recording payments; administrative centre for the Office —provision of stationery,

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equipment etc, file registry, issuing circulars and information to staff, co-ordination of staff training.

- **Emergency Planning** – managing the Emergency Planning Unit which aims to promote Civil Protection arrangements in Northern Ireland to ensure that the most efficient and effective response can be made to assist the public during and in the aftermath of a civil emergency; discharging the civil defence responsibilities previously accorded to the Secretary of State.
- **Public Appointments** – giving advice to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Northern Ireland Departments about policy on public appointments; maintaining a register of people who have indicated willingness to take up public appointments and monitors the appointments made by Departments.
- **Visits** – dealing with VIP visits which do not have a single sponsor Department; liaising closely with the visitor's office to agree a programme for the visit and ensuring that all the necessary arrangements are in place for the smooth running of the visit.
- **Honours** – dealing with the administration of the honours process within Northern Ireland under the overall direction of No 10 Downing Street; arranging local investitures where the recipients are unable to travel to London.
- **Assembly Ombudsman** – oversight of the Office of the Assembly Ombudsman.
- **Northern Ireland Bureau (USA)** – oversight of the Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington and any other international bureaux or liaison arrangements that may be established by the new Administration.

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5.3 Executive Information Services: Promoting understanding of and secure support for the Executive's role in the democratic process by:

- providing timely, informed, professional analysis and advice to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Departmental Ministers and senior officials on all aspects of communications;
- developing a comprehensive information strategy to the satisfaction of the Executive Committee by analysing levels of public knowledge and understanding of the aims and objectives of the new Executive; identifying key themes and messages; defining target audiences; and co-ordinating and devising opportunities for the delivery of messages;
- assisting in improving the image of Northern Ireland abroad;
- delivering the communications strategy by means of all appropriate communications methods including media relations, public relations, advertising, co-ordination and planning and regular monitoring and assessment of progress against targets and strategic objectives.

5.4 Office of the Legislative Counsel: Drafting primary legislation for Northern Ireland; ensuring the correct application to Northern Ireland of Bills which apply to the whole of the UK; advising Departments and Ministers on matters relating to legislation and on parliamentary and constitutional matters; and scrutinising certain statutory rules. The Office also oversees the work of the Statutory Publications Office which prepares reference materials relating to the statute law of Northern Ireland.

## 6. Policy Direction and Co-ordination

6.1 Economic Policy Unit: Providing a support unit for the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and through them, the Executive Committee as a whole in discharging their strategic role in respect of the policies and operation of the new



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Administration. In undertaking this role it will be important to ensure that the Unit operates in a complementary manner to DFP, whilst maintaining the operational integrity of DFP. The functions of the Unit will include assisting the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in:

- undertaking, together with the responsible Northern Ireland Minister and the Secretary of State, negotiations with HM Treasury on the size of the Northern Ireland Block grant and on EU and IFI funding;
- determining, within the Executive Committee, the Administration's detailed strategic goals and inputting them to the Programme of Government and the allocation of financial resources [working in conjunction with the Minister for Finance and Personnel];
- arbitrating on competing funding demands and making final determination thereon;
- co-ordinating the Executive's economic policies and monitoring the effectiveness of public spending in achieving the Administration's economic goals, including responsibility for the Economic and Social Steering Groups;
- co-ordinating EU policy and reviewing the progress and effectiveness of EU and IFI funds;
- overseeing the development of joint financing of public expenditure, including the Private Finance Initiative [working in conjunction with the Minister for Finance and Personnel.];
- monitoring the financial implications of legislation passed in the Northern Ireland Assembly at Westminster and by the EU;

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- evaluating the effectiveness of programmes, policies and procedures of Departments, Boards and Agencies [working in conjunction with the Minister for Finance & Personnel];
- assuming lead responsibility for the Public Service Office in promoting, monitoring and reporting on the delivery of Government objectives for improving the quality and efficiency in public services in Northern Ireland.
- establishing a Performance and Innovation Unit which will have two principal functions. First, it will focus on selected issues that cross departmental boundaries and propose policy innovations to improve the delivery of the objectives of the new Administration. Second, it will select aspects of policy that require review, with an emphasis on the better co-ordination and practical delivery of policy and services which involve more than one public sector body. The overall goal of the Performance and Innovation Unit is to ensure that the new Administration operates in an holistic manner in its approach to problem solving and adopts a preventative approach, ie shifting the balance of effort away from curing problems towards preventing them. [DN: The 18 December 1998 agreement specifies the establishment of a Policy innovation Unit additional to the Economic Policy Unit subsummed within which is the Performance and Innovation Unit. This may need to be rationalised. These functions are the subject of a paper currently under consideration by representatives of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.]

6.2 Programme of Government: Assisting the First and Deputy First Ministers, and the Executive Committee, to agree upon a "Programme for Government" for the life span of the new Administration setting out the strategic objectives and policy goals of the new Administration, related to which will be the preparation of an annual programme incorporating an agreed budget linked to policies and programmes, subject to approval by the Assembly, after scrutiny in Assembly Committees, on a cross community

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basis. This will entail mobilisation of cross party support to achieve agreed policy goals.

## 7. Significant Policy Areas

7.1 Equality Unit: Providing central policy advice and support and preparing legislation on equality issues and anti-discrimination legislation across all aspects of the new Administration. This includes responsibility for the following areas:

- the Equality and Equity Branch for Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) and the new equality of opportunity statutory obligations;
- new Targeting Social Need/Promoting Social Inclusion Branch;
- a Research Branch which will service the research needs of the above Branches, together with the Community Relations Branch of the Former Central Community Relations Unit;
- preparing and promoting anti-discrimination legislation on fair employment, gender and race;
- acting as the parent Department with responsibilities for the Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and in due course the Equality Commission;
- the application of the Disability Discrimination Act to Northern Ireland;
- providing the Secretariat to the Northern Ireland Disability Council;
- lead responsibility for women's issues;
- grant-making role in relation to women's issues and ethnic minority organisations.

[DN: These functions are the subject of a paper currently under discussion between representatives of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.]

- 7.2 Community Relations Unit: Providing central policy advice on community relations and cultural diversity; providing grant-aid to the Community Relations Council and other community relations bodies; and managing European Programmes measures on community relations.
- 7.3 Comprehensive Review of Public Administration: Overseeing the commissioning of a "Comprehensive Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland" which will bring forward options for the future governance of the region and will best meet the requirements of economy, effectiveness, efficiency and equity within an appropriate framework of accountability."

## 8. Arrangements Arising from the Agreement

- 8.1 Liaison with the Secretary of State on Reserved and Excepted Matters: Liaising with the Secretary of State on "excepted matters" as specified in Schedule 2 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and on "reserved matters" as specified in Schedule 3 of the Act; overseeing the outworkings of concordats between Northern Ireland Departments and Whitehall Departments; liaison between the new Administration and Parliamentary bodies such as Select Committees and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee; co-ordinating the input of relevant members of the Executive Committee to the British-Irish InterGovernmental Conference and to reviews of the new British-Irish Agreement.
- 8.2 Liaison with the North/South Ministerial Council: Supporting the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and other relevant Ministers in discharging their roles and responsibilities within the North/South Ministerial Council. This will include the provision of a joint secretariat from with the NICS working in conjunction with the Irish Civil Service.

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- 8.3 Liaison with the British-Irish Council: Co-ordinating the input of the new Administration to the work of the British-Irish Council and developing interparliamentary links with members of the Council.
- 8.4 Facilitation of the Civic Forum: Establishing the consultative Civic Forum and providing administrative support for the effective running of the Forum.

## 9. International Fund for Ireland

- 9.1 A liaison role on the effective operation of the International Fund for Ireland in conjunction with the Irish Government.

## 10. Structure and Staffing

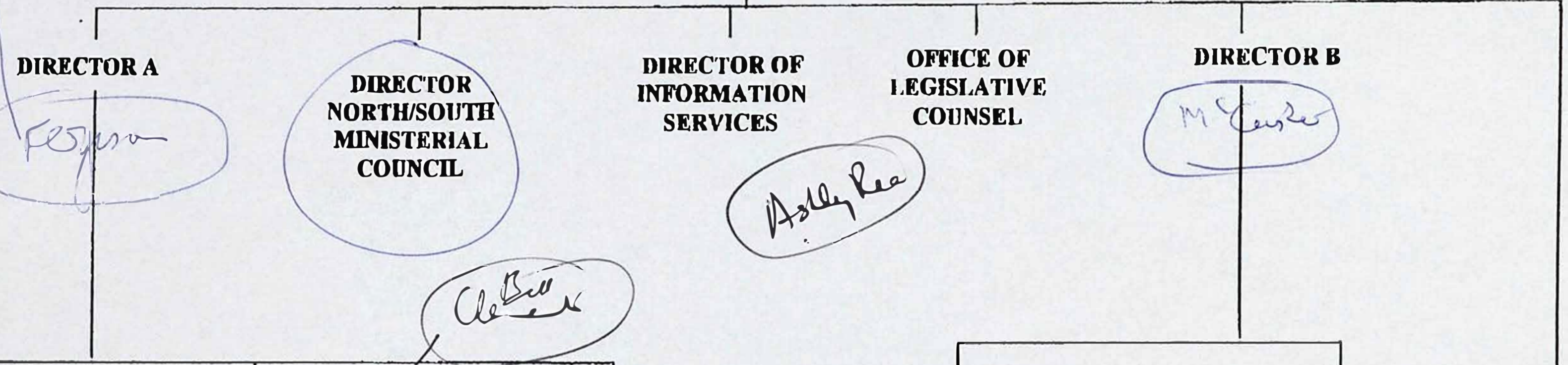
- 10.1 A proposed structure for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, which would operate under the direction and control of the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service at official level, is at Annex A. The staffing profile of the organisation is at Annex B.

January 1999

Holmes Peave  
 McNeill Toal  
 Dillon Madigan  
 Hester  
 Quinn  
 Radeff  
 Supreme  
 Hill  
 Hunter  
 McCann  
 M'Donnell  
 Gibson  
 M. Egan

# Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister ORGANISATIONAL CHART

Private Offices ----- Head of the NICS/Secretary to the Executive Committee



- Equality Unit
- Community Relations Unit

- Central Secretariat (1)
  - Personnel & Finance Support
  - Emergency Planning
  - Public Appointments
  - Ombudsman
  - Visits/Honours
  - NI Bureau (USA)

- Central Secretariat (2)
  - Legislative Programme
  - Machinery of the Administration
  - Other co-ordination, PQs, etc

- Executive Committee Secretariat
- Ministerial Code
- Liaison with SoS
- Research and accepted matters
- Links with London
- Civic Forum
- Consultative Forum

- Economic Policy Unit/ Performance and Innovation Unit
- Policy Innovation Unit
- Programme for Government
- Comprehensive Review of Public Administration

IFI

mtg  
w/sa

G. O'Doherty

Festino

DIRECTOR NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES

Ashtly Rea

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

M. Egan

Condon  
 P. M. Allison  
 Denis Ritchie  
 Denis McCay

Maggie Smillie

Mormon

T. Smyth  
 S. Fitzgibbon  
 G. Smyth

L. Devlin  
 P. M. Donnelly  
 A. O'Boyle

Rosario

V. Heron  
 L. Sheehan  
 S. Egan  
 C. Mullar

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ANNEX A

**RESTRICTED** - POLICY**ANNEX B****STAFFING PROFILE**

(Initial Outline)

**Private Offices (excluding provision for Junior Ministers)**

Special Advisers	x	6	
PPS	x	2	
PS	x	2	
APS	x	2	
Diary Secretary	x	2	
Correspondence Secretary	x	2	
Personal Secretaries	x	8	
Typists	x	2	
Administrative Assistants	x	2	28

**Head of the NICS Office**

Mr Semple	x	1	
DP	x	1	
SPS	x	1	
Personal Secretary	x	1	
Administrative Assistant	x	1	5

**Executive Information Service**

Director of Communications	x	1	
Deputy Director	x	1	
Senior Information Officers (Newsroom)	x	6	
Information Officers (Newsroom)	x	2	
Co-ordination and Forward Planning			
Principal Information Officer	x	1	
Senior Information Officer	x	1	
Executive Officer	x	1	
Staff Officer (possible)	x	1	

**Public Relations Unit**

Senior Information Officer	x	1	
Staff Officer	x	1	

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Executive Officer x 1

## Internet Site

Information Officer x 1

Grade D x 1

## Publications

Senior Information Officer x 1

Information Officer x 1

## Departments of the Executive

Principal Information Officers x 10

Senior Information Officers [ 1 ]

Information Officers [ 1 ]

## Administration

Executive Officers x 2

Administrative Officers x 2

Administrative Assistants x 2

Typists x 2

## Head of Finance/Administration/Project Manager

Grade A x 1

40+



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**DIRECTOR A**

x 1

**Equality Unit**

Grade 5

x 1

Equality & Equity Branch

x 4

New TSN/PSI Branch

x 4

Research Branch

x 5

Anti-discrimination legislation

FEC, EOC, CRE and Equality  
Commission

x 4

Secretariat to NI Disability Unit

x 2

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Community Relations Unit

[ ]

**Central Secretariat (1)**

Grade 5

x 1

Personnel & Finance Support

[ ]

Emergency Planning

[ ]

Public Appointments

[ ]

Visits/Honours

[ ]

Washington Bureau

[ ]

**Central Secretariat (2)**

Grade 5

x 1

Legislative Programme

[ ]

Machinery of the Administration

[ ]

Other Co-ordination, PQs

[ ]

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**DIRECTOR B**

x 1

**Grade 5**

x 1

**Executive Committee Secretariat**

**Liaison with Secretary of State**

[ ]

**Civic Forum**

x 8

**Consultative Forum**

[ ]

**Grade 5**

x 1

**Economic Policy Unit/Performance  
and Innovation Unit**

[ ]

[ ]

**Policy Innovation Unit**

[ ]

**Public Service Office**

**Better Government**

x 10

**Continuous Improvement Unit**

x 4

**Central Information Technology Unit**

x 13

**Service First Unit**

x 5