

Head of News and Digital

Grade 6

Closing Date: Tuesday 11 May 2021

Welcome message from Madeleine Alessandri

Thank you for your interest in the Northern Ireland Office.

Whether you are at the beginning of your career, returning after a break or looking for a change of direction, the NIO offers a wide range of exciting opportunities. It is a very special place to work. We are a small department with a lot going on and you will be working with a great team of people supporting the delivery of the UK Government's priorities for Northern Ireland.

For a small department, we have a significant role in a number of policy areas that are at the heart of the government's agenda: from dealing with the legacy of the Troubles to building a strong economic future for Northern Ireland and much more in between. You will find great opportunities with us to learn and develop your professional skills, working on some of the most complex policy challenges to deliver real world outcomes.

We are an organisation whose success is wholly dependent on our people. At the NIO we strive to create an environment where everyone can bring their whole self to work each and every day. We encourage flexible working and have a 'virtual by default' approach to the way we work. We are ambitious to increase our diversity of experience, background and thought to harness the value and benefits that different perspectives bring to the policy challenges we face.

I hope you will consider joining us for this exciting opportunity.

Madeleine Alessandri
Permanent Secretary

About the Northern Ireland Office

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is at the heart of the government's EU Exit and Economic agendas. In addition there are significant policy portfolios on security and dealing the legacy of the past. We also have a full range of corporate services led by qualified professionals.

The Northern Ireland Office supports the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in promoting the best interests of Northern Ireland within a stronger United Kingdom. It ensures Northern Ireland's interests are fully and effectively represented at UK Government level, and the Government's responsibilities are fully and effectively represented in Northern Ireland.

Our key purpose is to make politics work by working alongside the Northern Ireland Executive to help improve the effectiveness and delivery of the devolved institutions; to ensure a more secure Northern Ireland; deliver a growing economy including rebalancing the economy; and ensure a stronger society by supporting initiatives designed to build better community relations and a genuinely shared future.

We are a Department that values its staff. We work hard to create an environment that speaks to our values; **flexible, empowering, inclusive**. We have a range of active staff groups including our Staff Engagement Group, Wellbeing, and Diversity & Inclusion networks. We encourage flexible working and work "virtually by default". We are a small, friendly department, passionate about Northern Ireland and passionate about our people.

Director Biography

Andy Pike recently returned to the NIO to lead the departments communication and external relations Directorate and has considerable experience in Northern Ireland. Previous to this role in the NIO Andy was Director of the National Security Communication team. Prior to this Andy has extensive experience in senior roles including as Director of Communications and Engagement at GCHQ for nearly three years, Head of the GREAT Britain Campaign for two years at No 10, as well as having spent time at the BBC. Andy has been involved with Northern Ireland for more than twenty years including as head of press at the British Embassy in Dublin and Consul for Northern Ireland in the United States.

Responsibilities include:

- Communications Strategy
- Leadership of Northern Ireland External and Internal Communications effort
- Leadership of all Departmental External Relations including Ministerial Engagement
- Corporate Leadership for Government Communication Service in Northern Ireland

Add photo



Overview of NIO communications

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) policy agenda is never far from the headlines.

For a small department, we have a significant role in a number of areas that are at the heart of the government's agenda: from dealing with the legacy of the Troubles to building a strong economic future for Northern Ireland and marking the Centenary of Northern Ireland.

Find out more about the work of the NIO on the following platforms:

Passionate about Northern Ireland. Flexible, empowering, inclusive



About the role

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is recruiting for a Head of News & Digital (G6). This is a crucial role for delivering the UK Government's priorities for Northern Ireland.

The Head of News & Digital plays a crucial leadership role in the NIO. You will be expected to hit the ground running, quickly becoming a trusted adviser to Ministers and Special Advisers and a visible ambassador for the NIO. You must be capable of making a significant contribution as a senior leader to the smooth operation of the whole Communications Directorate.

We are looking for an experienced communicator with a highly developed news sense, political nous and experience of dealing with complex issues in a fast-paced environment, subject to significant media attention and public scrutiny. You will have the confidence to brief the media on thorny issues and be responsible for a high-quality 24-hour media operation that delivers fast, accurate, co-ordinated responses to media queries.

You should have demonstrable experience of acting as a digital lead or specialist within a communications environment, knowing how to commission and use research and insight to deliver high quality outcomes. You will be responsible for delivering the NIO digital strategy and lead development and delivery of high quality digital communications, integrated with wider communications activity to support NIO priorities.

Our Values

Passionate about Northern Ireland. Flexible, empowering, inclusive

We developed our values through extensive engagement across the office, ensuring that we captured the values and behaviours that matter most to us. Our sense of commitment to Northern Ireland and our shared values are at the heart of what we do and how we do it.

Flexible

- We are flexible in how we think and how we work
- We are agile in our approach to emerging situations
- We find solutions
- We are creative and innovative
- We embrace change
- We allow ourselves the flex to think strategically about the future, as well as responding at a pace to the immediate when required

Empowering

- We empower ourselves through our focus on personal development, seizing opportunities to grow and broaden our experiences
- We empower decisions to be taken at the lowest appropriate level
- We understand our levels of responsibility and accountability
- We are recognised for our expertise and take personal responsibility for developing our skills.
- We empower those around us through responsible delegation and creating an environment where new ideas are encouraged
- We are comfortable to challenge and be challenged

Inclusive

- We create an environment where everyone can bring their true selves to work every day and flourish
- We ensure everyone has a voice
- We listen to all voices
- We prize diversity of all kinds for the strength it brings to our team
- We are respectful of differences. We create an environment where everyone can bring their true selves to work every day and flourish

Our Values

Passionate about Northern Ireland: flexible, empowering, inclusive



Diversity & Inclusion

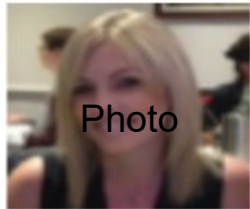
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The Northern Ireland Office is committed to being an inclusive employer with a diverse workforce. We encourage applications from people from the widest possible diversity of backgrounds, cultures and experiences. We are focused on building an organisation that understands and values staff with a diversity of backgrounds, ideas, skills and experience, as they contribute to greater creativity, innovation and effective decision making in meeting our strategic objectives.

By joining us, you will become part of an all encompassing organisation that is passionate about Northern Ireland and in equal measure passionate about how our behaviours reflect our commitment to our embedded values - flexible, empowering and inclusive.



Lloyd Ryan - Senior Security Advisor - I have only been with the Northern Ireland Office for a few months but have felt at home right from the start. I feel like I have joined a family where everyone is positively looking out for each other and genuinely cares about me. I feel valued and respected for my contribution to the NIO, it is a great place to work.



Photo

Becky Nicholas-Ludkin - Policy Advisor - I joined the NIO in 1991. In 2002 I was diagnosed with MS. As my needs and mobility changed, the NIO has adapted with me and supported me with a variety of reasonable adjustments, including variable working patterns, online training courses and interviews and all the IT and office equipment that I need to work from home. I know my opinions are valued and listened to. I am the Disability Advocate and part of the Diversity and Inclusion Group.

Job details

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The following sections will provide the detailed breakdown of the role to support your application

Job title: Head of News & Digital

Number of roles: 1

Grade: 6

Salary: (Salary scale: Inner London £60,295 -£76,000 and National £52,119 -£72,000)

A Recruitment and Retention Allowance is available for Belfast-based staff up to a maximum of £6,000 for Band 6, bringing the effective band minima up to £58,119 (from £52,119). This allowance is non-pensionable and subject to annual review in line with MoJ pay awards.

Duration: 2 year loan/fixed term contract with the option of a third by mutual agreement

Level of security required: SC

Location: Belfast or London.

If the candidate does not live in Northern Ireland, please be advised that very regular travel to Belfast will be required

Working hours: 37 hours a week

Working pattern: Full time

Essential requirements and skills

Essential Requirements

Behaviours

- Communicating and Influencing
- Leadership
- Delivering at Pace

Technical Skills

- Communications & Digital – Impact: Core
- Communications & Digital – Insight: Core
- Communications & Digital – Ideas: Core

Selection process details

Application process

To apply for this post, you will need to submit your application form via the recruitment portal. This should be submitted via Civil Service Jobs and be completed no later than **midnight on Tuesday 11 May 2021**.

Provide a maximum of **1000** words in the Statement of Suitability section explaining how you meet the required personal attributes and skills. Behaviours form a part of the selection process, you will therefore be required to provide evidence against each of the selected behaviours. Please also provide a CV.

Part of the application process will require you to complete diversity questionnaire, you will have the option to select 'prefer not to say' but this information is very important to the Civil Service.

Should you encounter any issues with your online application please get in touch with:
moj-recruitment-vetting-enquiries@gov.sscl.com

If you do not receive acknowledgement of your application within 48 hours, please contact the above email address.

Selection process details

Shortlist

At this stage, the panel, including the hiring manager, will assess your **behaviours** and select applicants demonstrating the best fit with the role by considering the evidence you have provided against the criteria set out in the 'Statement of Suitability' section. It is therefore crucial you ensure all areas of the selection process are addressed as missing information may affect your application.

The Interview

The interview will consist of the candidate's pre-prepared presentation, followed by questions where candidates will be expected to build on the information provided in their application. These interviews may take place virtually, depending on wider circumstances.

Interview structure and how to prepare

Behaviour questions – Behaviours relate to whether applicants have the skills to carry out specific tasks by asking for examples of their experience. The following techniques/models may be useful when thinking through responses for interview and demonstrating capability.

An example of a behaviour question would be:

‘Tell me about a time when you’ve had to deal with a difficult customer requirement.’

In your preparation for interview, please ensure you refer to the [Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours framework](#). This will provide you with an overview of the expected performance expectation for this post against the above behaviours at this level.

Consider how you might articulate your experience against the behavioural expectation set out. When preparing and responding to behaviour based questions, we recommend you use the following model:

- The ‘STAR’ model, (situation, task, action and result)

Salary and benefits

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Salary

The salary for this post is set within the Band A pay range: **Inner London £60,295-£76,000 and National £52,119-£72,000**. A

Recruitment and Retention Allowance is available for Belfast-based staff up to a maximum of £6,000 for Band 6, bringing the effective band minima up to £58,119 (from £52,119). This allowance is non-pensionable and subject to annual review in line with MoJ pay awards.

Salary for a serving Civil Servant will be within normal rules of appointment on level transfer or promotion. It is expected that new entrants to the Civil Service will start on the pay band minimum.

Benefits

Whatever your role, we take your career and development seriously, and want to enable you to build a really successful career with the Department and wider Civil Service. It is crucial that our employees have the right skills to develop their careers and meet the challenges ahead, and you'll benefit from regular performance and development reviews to ensure this development is ongoing. As a Civil Service employee, you'll be entitled to a large range of benefits.

This includes:

- 25 days on appointment increasing to 30 days after 5 years service. Public/Privilege days will be notified locally according to location.
- A competitive contributory pension scheme that you can enter as soon as you join where we will make a significant contribution to the cost of your pension; where your contributions come out of your salary before any tax is taken; and where your pension will continue to provide valuable benefits for you and your family if you are too ill to continue to work or die before you retire.
- Flexible working patterns including part-time and access to Flexible Working Schemes allowing you to vary your working day as long as you work your total hours.

Salary and benefits

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Continued:

- Generous paid maternity, adoption and shared parental leave which is notably more than the statutory minimum offered by many other employers.
- Childcare benefits (policy for new employees as of 5 April 2018): The government has introduced the Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) scheme. Working parents can open an online childcare account and for every £8 they pay in, the government adds £2, up to a maximum of £2000 a year for each child or £4000 for a disabled child. Parents then use the funds to pay for registered childcare. Existing employees may be able to continue to claim childcare vouchers, so please check how the policy would work for you here.
- Interest-free loans allowing you to spread the cost of an annual travel season ticket or a new bicycle.
- The opportunity to use onsite facilities including fitness centres and staff canteens (where applicable).
- Occupational sick pay.

FAQs



1. Can I apply if I am not currently a civil servant?

Yes.

2. Is this role permanent?

No, it is a 2 year posting. For civil servants from Other Government Departments it will be on the basis of a 2 year loan or secondment.

3. Is this role suitable for part-time working?

Flexible working arrangements are available but you should discuss your needs with the hiring manager if you are invited to interview.

4. Will the role involve travel?

Some occasional travel may be required for this role.

5. Where will the role be based?

If successful you will be based in either London or Belfast. Unfortunately relocation costs will not be reimbursed.

6. Can I claim back any expenses incurred during the recruitment process?

No. Unfortunately we will not be able to reimburse you, except in exceptional circumstances and only when agreed in advance.

7. What nationality do I need to hold in order to apply?

To be eligible for employment to this role you must be a national from the following countries:

- The United Kingdom
- The Republic of Ireland
- The Commonwealth*
- A European Economic Area (EEA) Member State
- Switzerland
- Turkey Certain family members of EEA, Switzerland and Turkish nationals are also eligible to apply regardless of their nationality. (*Commonwealth citizens not yet in the UK, who have no right of abode in the UK and who do not have leave to enter the UK are ineligible to apply.) For further information on whether you are eligible to apply, please visit [Gov.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

8. Is security clearance required?

Yes. If successful you must hold, or be willing to obtain, security clearance to SC level. More information about the vetting process can be found [here](#). This is not a reserved post.

9. What reasonable adjustments can be made if I have a disability?

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments in order to support disabled job applicants and ensure that you are not disadvantaged in the recruitment and assessment process. Reasonable adjustments could include; allowing extra time during selection tests; ensuring that information is provided in an accessible format or; by providing training.

If you feel that you may need a reasonable adjustment to be made, or you would like to discuss your requirements in more detail, please contact us in the first instance.

If you wish to receive a hard copy of the information, or in an alternative format e.g. Audio, Braille or large font then please contact:

(moj-recruitment-vetting-enquiries@gov.sscl.com)

In the exceptional circumstance, citing reasons, that you cannot apply online, please post your application to: The Recruiting Managing, Stormont House, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SH.. Please quote the vacancy reference on the envelope.

10. What is the role of the Civil Service Commission in relation to recruitment into the Civil Service?

The Civil Service Commission has two primary functions:

- to provide assurance that selection for appointment to the Civil Service is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as outlined in the [Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles](#). For the most senior posts in the Civil Service, the Commission discharges its responsibilities directly by overseeing the recruitment process and by a Commissioner chairing the selection panel.
- to hear and determine appeals made by civil servants under the Civil Service Code which sets out the Civil Service values – Honesty, Integrity, Impartiality and Objectivity – and forms part of the relationship between civil servants and their employer.

11. What do I do if I want to make a complaint?

The law requires that selection for appointment to the Civil Service is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as outlined in the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles. If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Recruitment Principles, and you wish to make a complaint, you should contact Alison Logan (Alison.Logan@nio.gov.uk) in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the Department, you can contact the Civil Service Commission at:

<https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/recruitment/civilservicerecruitmentcomplaints/>

Further Information

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Terms of Appointment

Appointments through this campaign will be on the basis of a loan or secondment for a period of 2 years for candidates from Other Government Departments.

Fixed-term appointments are temporary appointments often used to employ individuals for a set period of time.

Terms of appointment for a serving Civil Servant would be by agreement between the individual and their current department, and within normal rules of appointment on level transfer or promotion.

The expectation within the NIO is that staff will normally remain in post for a minimum of 12 months for band C, 18 months for band B and 24 months for band A, and you will not be eligible to apply for NIO roles on level transfer during that time.

Feedback

Only candidates invited to interview or assessment will receive feedback on their application.

If we identify more appointable candidates than we have roles for at this time, we will operate a reserve list for 6 months.

Equal Opportunities

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) values equality and diversity in employment. We are committed to being an organisation in which fairness and equality of opportunity is central to the approach in business and working relationships and where the organisational culture reflects and supports these values. In the NIO you have the right to a working environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation regardless of race, ethnic or national origin, age, religion, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, working hours, trade union membership or trade union activity.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Disabled Persons

Disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria in the job specification are guaranteed an interview. Selection will be on merit. If you wish to claim a guaranteed interview under the Disability Commitment, you should complete the Equality and Diversity section. It is not necessary to state the nature of your disability.

Further Information

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Pension Scheme

The appointment will be pensionable from the outset. The Civil Service offers excellent pension arrangements and pensions are an important part of the reward package.

For detailed information, please visit <http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/>.

Conflicts of Interest

Candidates must declare any interests they may have that might cause questions to be raised about their approach to the business of the Department. They are required to declare any relevant business interests, shareholdings, positions of authority, retainers, consultancy arrangements or other connections with commercial, public or voluntary bodies, both for themselves and for their spouses/partners. The successful candidate will be required to give up any conflicting interests and his/her other business and financial interests may be published.

Security Clearance

Candidates should have, or expect to undergo SC level security clearance to take up this post. Further information about security vetting can be found [here](#).

You may wish to be aware that there are various factors (noted below) that may affect the length of time the check takes, or ultimately affect whether a candidate is eligible for security clearance.

Lived outside UK: For meaningful checks to be carried out individuals should have been resident in the United Kingdom for the last 3 years for Counter Terrorist Check (CTC), 5 years for Security Clearance (SC) and 10 years for Developed Vetting (DV).

Employee records: Any indication of unreliability, relevant in a security context

Criminal record information: It is important to be honest about any offences committed in the past. Having a criminal record is not an automatic bar, each case will be considered individually

Security Service records: Concerns arising from checks undertaken by the Security Service.

Financial irregularities: For SC or DV clearance only - Poor financial judgment or management, excessive expenditure, or high levels of indebtedness.