



Northern Ireland
Assembly



Head of the Research and Information Service

£81,349 - £83,765

Candidate Information Booklet

Completed Application Forms must be submitted no later
than **12 noon (UK time) on 6 January 2025**

Please retain a copy of this booklet for your reference throughout the selection process.

Foreword

Thank you for your interest in the position of Head of the Research and Information Service (AG3) in the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Assembly Commission).

The Assembly Commission operates in a dynamic political and parliamentary environment and, as a newly appointed Head of the Research and Information Service, you will be provided with an excellent opportunity to make an important and valued contribution to Assembly business at Parliament Buildings.

Working at the Assembly offers a rewarding career and the opportunity to work in an interesting and challenging environment. As Head of the Research and Information Service, you will lead a team providing professional, evidence-based, non-partisan research and information services to Assembly Members, Assembly Committees, the Assembly Commission and senior management. This is an exciting opportunity to join a high-profile organisation, in a senior role, with a dedicated and inclusive team.

In turn, we offer a competitive salary and an excellent pension provision where you contribute between 7.35 and 8.05% of salary and the Assembly Commission will contribute a further 34.25%.

We offer an annual leave allocation of 25 days, increasing by one day per year up to a maximum of 30 days. In addition, we offer 12 days of public and privilege holidays. We also offer a range of other [employee benefits listed on the Recruitment website](#).

Please read the information provided in the candidate information booklet carefully and if you are interested in this exciting post, I would encourage you to submit your application.

If you would like to find out more about the post before making an application please contact John Power on 02890 521793 or john.power@niassembly.gov.uk.



Tara Caul

Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services

About Us

The Assembly is at the heart of political and public life as the democratically elected parliament that represents the interests of Northern Ireland and its people.

Established as a key element of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, the Assembly comprises 90 Members and has three main functions - making legislation, scrutinising the Executive and representing constituents.

In accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the staff, services and facilities which are needed to support the work of the Assembly are provided by the Assembly Commission, a corporate body comprising the Speaker and five Members of the Assembly. The day-to-day running of the Assembly is delegated to the Clerk/Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The Assembly Commission therefore provides the infrastructure (including Parliament Buildings), facilities and staff to allow the Assembly and its Committees to meet and to encourage public awareness of, and engagement with, the parliamentary process. It also pays the salaries of Members and reimburses the expenses which enable them to undertake their duties both at the Assembly and in their constituency offices.

The Assembly Commission is a high-achieving and professional organisation providing impartial support to the Assembly and its Members. The Assembly Commission is independent of the Executive and the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

The Assembly Commission has approximately 400 staff and an annual revenue budget of £68m. [Our organisational structure is illustrated on the Northern Ireland Assembly Recruitment website.](#)

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About the Role

The Head of the Research and Information Service (RaISe) leads a team of approximately 42 staff, comprising senior researchers (SROs), researchers (ROs), librarians and support staff. The Head of RaISe will be responsible for leading and managing staff and teams, to build a high performing team that is focused on delivering excellence in all aspects of service delivery.

The Head of RaISe is a central senior role with responsibility for the provision of professional, evidence based, non-partisan research and information services to Assembly Members, Assembly Committees, the Assembly Commission and senior management.

[RaISe](#) is a high-profile, highly valued and respected service, with research being routinely published and delivered orally in open Committee sessions. The role of the Head of RaISe is both demanding and challenging, operating as it does in a highly pressurised and scrutinised environment. The role will be focused on the research and information needs of the Assembly now and into the future.

RaISe produces a series of [publications](#), covering a variety of topics which are of interest to Members, Committees and the general public. RaISe also produces constituency profiles which provide a statistical overview of each Northern Ireland constituency and a blog has been developed called [Research Matters](#).

The Assembly Library is within the RaISe business area.

The Head of RaISe is part of the Assembly Leadership Team and the Head of Business Forum.

The Head of RaISe manages 5 senior researchers and reports to the Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services.

The Person

You will be responsible for effectively leading RaISe.

You should ensure that the RaISe service is aligned to the [Corporate Strategy](#)

[and Values of the Assembly Commission](#), is delivered to an excellent standard and is strategically focused, innovative, impactful and forward looking.

You should have the ability to motivate and inspire cohesive and collaborative teams and to communicate clearly and effectively as you carry out your new role.

You should seek opportunities to develop and enhance the RalSe service efficiently and effectively in line with recognised best practice, collaborating internally and externally with relevant stakeholders.

You should have the ability to exercise sound judgment in a political environment and ensure that research provided by RalSe is impartial at all times.

Core Responsibilities

As the Head of RalSe, your duties will include:

Strategic

- Providing strategic leadership for RalSe and as a member of the Assembly Leadership Team (Senior Management Team and Heads of Business), Directorate Management Team and Head of Business forum.
- Leading the research and information teams to provide Assembly Members, Committees, the Assembly Commission and senior management with research and information, including, where necessary, the procurement of external advice.
- Being an advocate of the Assembly Commission's Values and demonstrating the Assembly Commission's Behaviours in all that you do.
- Participating in Directorate Management Team meetings to develop and influence solutions to operational, policy and strategic issues.

- Enhancing and developing policies and delivery mechanisms in relation to the provision of research and information, aligned with the Corporate Strategy and Values of the Assembly Commission.
- Being visible and proactively finding innovative ways to raise the profile of RalSe, showcasing and marketing research and information resources, building strong relationships with users to identify their needs, and designing all services to meet those needs.
- Being outward facing in developing and improving our connections with external organisations and stakeholders, forging partnerships and networking with peers to support innovation and identify best practice from within, and beyond, the parliamentary information sector.
- Identifying best practice and ensuring that all research and information products are evidence-based, non-partisan, delivered to an excellent standard and meet the needs of users.
- Developing, implementing and maintaining the strategic plan for RalSe and ensuring that RalSe service standards are met and business plans delivered within agreed deadlines.
- Leading on the RalSe's digital and information approach.
- Maximising technological developments including AI and generative AI and considering how these can be harnessed in the delivery of accessible, inclusive and easy to use research and information services.

Managing People

- Leading and managing staff and teams to build a high performing team that is focused on delivering excellence in all aspects of service delivery.
- Promoting a culture of learning and innovation with a strong customer

ethos.

- Ensuring good and regular communication and collaboration with RaISe clients (Committees, Members and senior staff in the Assembly Commission).
- Actively identifying, creating and nurturing appropriate internal and external networks to support RaISe service development through establishing links with government officials, external research bodies/communities and other parliamentary library and research services.
- Complying with all of the Assembly Commission's staff policies and procedures, including Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work policies and procedures and all mandatory training requirements.

Accountability and Corporate Governance

- Preparing and presenting papers to the Senior Management Team and Assembly Commission on resource issues, policies, strategic plans for approval etc.
- Leading on engagement with staff to collate input to the Corporate Plan and preparing directorate contributions to corporate policies for discussion with the Director for inclusion in the Plan.
- Leading in the planning and delivery of corporate and directorate projects and relevant actions/milestones in the Corporate Plan.
- Using resources effectively, including budget and staff, to ensure that appropriate resources are in place to deliver in their areas of responsibility within the Corporate Plan. This includes approval of governance returns and preparation of annual budgets.

- Identifying and assessing key risks to the Assembly Commission's business objectives and collaborating with other Heads of Business in the Directorate to amend and review the Directorate Risk Register and put in place effective controls to manage risk.
- Managing information and records in accordance with established policies and statutory requirements.
- Carrying out other duties that the Assembly Commission reasonably requires of you.

Essential Criteria

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications, have:

1. An honours degree (of minimum 2:1 classification) or a degree of an equivalent or higher standard in any subject area;

AND

2. A post graduate research degree or a Master's Degree (or a degree of an equivalent or higher standard) in any subject area;

AND

3. At least 5 years' experience in each of the areas detailed at (a) – (d):
 - a) Producing non-partisan and evidence- based research and information briefings or reports on complex public policy issues. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have produced research and information briefings, or reports, involving the proficient application and publication of evidence-based analysis and have professional experience of making oral presentations based on their research;

- b) Leading and developing staff to create a high performing team in a research or information setting;
- c) Effectively leading and managing the delivery of a programme of work by a research or information team or similar, including detailed planning and strategic thinking to ensure effective service delivery;
- d) Promoting and delivering a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, efficiency and value for money.

Shortlisting Criteria

Should shortlisting be required, the following shortlisting criteria will be applied:

- Evidence of understanding the political context in which the Assembly operates and the ability to mitigate risks to the reputation of RalSe as a trusted and impartial source of information for Members.

Assembly Skills and Behaviours

The following Assembly Skills and Behaviours will be assessed during the selection process:

Delivering a quality service

...is about providing a high-quality and efficient service to our customers. It is thinking ahead, managing resources effectively and delivering work on time and to a high standard. It is also using professional or technical expertise to enhance service delivery.

Building relationships and effective communication

...is creating and maintaining positive, professional and respectful internal and external working relationships through effective and appropriate communications.

Initiating improvement and delivering change

...is looking for and being open to new and innovative ideas and improvements to the service provided. It is being flexible and adapting positively and professionally to sustain performance when the situation changes, workloads increase or priorities change. It is about forming sound, evidence-based decisions and being accountable for results.

Managing and leading self and others

... is setting high standards for ourselves. It is about guiding, motivating and developing others to achieve high performance. It is about engaging others in delivering a corporate vision of excellence, expertise and innovation in support of the Assembly as a legislature.

Parliamentary and Political Understanding

... is displaying an appropriate understanding of the wider political environment; what the Assembly does and how our role fits in; and the level of public scrutiny to which the actions and decisions of Assembly staff are exposed. It requires impartiality, integrity and political sensitivity.

Equal Opportunities Statement

The Assembly Commission is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or people with dependents or without. **All applications for employment will be considered on the basis of merit.**

Location

The successful applicant will be based in Parliament Buildings, Belfast.

The Assembly Commission operates a Hybrid Working Policy and the balance between working in Parliament Buildings and working at home will depend on business and service need.

Completing the form

Only the information presented in the application form will be considered by the selection panel. CVs or other supplementary material will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms. Completed online forms must be submitted by **12 noon (UK time) on 6 January 2025**.

[Launch the application portal and complete the application form.](#)

Application forms submitted after the closing time and date will not be accepted.

Recruitment and Selection Framework

There are five elements within the Recruitment and Selection Framework:

Experience – the knowledge or mastery of an activity or subject gained through involvement in or exposure to it.

Ability – the aptitude or potential to perform to the required standard.

Technical – the demonstration of specific professional skills, knowledge or qualifications.

Assembly Skills and Behaviours – the actions and activities that people do which result in effective performance in a job.

Strengths – the things we do regularly, do well and that motivate us.

The elements that will be assessed for this role are Experience, Technical, Assembly Skills and Behaviours and Strengths and the selection method(s) that will be used are detailed below. Further information on the [Recruitment and Selection Framework](#) are included in the [Guidance on Recruitment and Selection for Applicants](#).

Stages of the Selection Process

Eligibility Sift

The essential criteria reflect the experience and knowledge that an applicant must possess in order to be able to undertake the role. An eligibility sift will be carried out on the basis of the information contained in the essential criteria section of the application form. You must therefore demonstrate clearly in your form how, and to what extent, you meet with the essential criteria for the post.

Shortlisting

The Selection Panel reserve the right to use shortlisting as part of the selection process for this post. Should shortlisting be used, the shortlisting criterion listed at page 4 will be applied. The Selection Panel reserve the right to set a minimum standard for the shortlisting criterion and/or to only invite those who score highest in the shortlisting criterion to the next stage of the selection process. If shortlisting is not necessary, all applicants who have demonstrated the essential criteria will proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

Interview Stage

Applicants invited to interview will be assessed using the Essential Criteria, Strengths and Assembly Skills and Behaviours as outlined above.

Part of the interview process will be the delivery of a presentation.

Interviews are planned for: 6 and 7 March 2025

Further Interview Stage

The Selection Panel reserves the right to hold a further interview stage if deemed necessary.

Disability Confident

The Assembly Commission is a Disability Confident Committed Employer and for our recruitment, we have committed to:

- ensuring our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible;
- communicating and promoting vacancies;
- offering an interview to disabled people who meet the essential criteria for the job (the Guaranteed Interview Scheme); and
- anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required.

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) supports applicants with disabilities or those with a long-term impairment or health condition, that is expected to last for at least 12 months by offering an interview to disabled people who meet the essential criteria for the job. If you are applying under GIS it is therefore important that you include all relevant information in your application form. You should refer to the Guidance on Recruitment and Selection for Applicants for more information.

If an assessment or test is used as a shortlisting tool, then applicants applying under GIS will not be required to complete the assessment or test and will be offered a guaranteed interview, provided that they demonstrate in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the role.

In instances where an assessment or test forms part of the selection process and is not a shortlisting tool, then all applicants must meet the minimum standard required for that assessment or test, including those applying under GIS.

If you wish to submit your application under the GIS, or if you require adjustments to enable you to participate in any part of the selection process, please indicate this on the application form or contact us at recruitment@niassembly.gov.uk. **Please note that you will be required to provide written confirmation of your disability or long-term health condition from a general practitioner or an appropriate specialist, by the closing date for applications.**

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office – contact details are available on NIDirect:

[Find contact details for your local Jobs and Benefits Office.](#)

Key Employee Benefits

We offer a competitive salary, excellent pension provision and generous annual leave allowance.

We also offer a range of non-salary benefits which include hybrid working; supportive family friendly policies; flexi-time; health and wellbeing initiatives including an Employee Assistance Programme; supported learning and development; Cycle to Work Scheme; Payroll Giving; and volunteering opportunities.

The successful applicant will be given suitable training, including formal specialised courses as necessary.

[View further details of our employee benefits.](#)

Terms and Conditions of Appointment

This is a permanent appointment. The successful candidate will be an employee of the Assembly Commission. All appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of pre-appointment enquiries which include an Access NI basic check and the satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period.

The standard working week is 37 hours, (excluding meal breaks). Working hours will be dictated by the mode of operation of the Assembly and may involve work into late evenings and on occasions, at weekends and on public holidays.

The taking of annual leave may be influenced by the Parliamentary timetable.

Equality Monitoring

Under Fair Employment legislation, we are required to monitor the community background and gender of those applying for jobs. You must therefore complete the equal opportunities monitoring section of the application form when applying for the post.

Merit List

The merit list of applicants deemed to be appointable will remain “live” for 18 months from the date it is signed and may be used to fill any further permanent opportunities for the same post.

Communication during the recruitment process

The Assembly Recruitment Team will issue most communication electronically. You should therefore regularly check your email account to make sure you do not miss any important communication. Please note, sometimes the Recruitment Team emails are automatically filtered as spam by email providers.

Further Information

If you require more information on the recruitment process, please contact the Assembly Recruitment Team on 02890 521741 or email us at recruitment@niassembly.gov.uk.

Further information about the Assembly can be obtained on the [Northern Ireland Assembly website](#).

The Candidate Information Booklet does not constitute any term or condition of employment.