



Northern Ireland  
Assembly



# **Apprentice Solicitor (2-year fixed term)**

**£28,016 - £29,682**

## **Candidate Information Booklet**

Completed Application Forms must be submitted no later  
than 12 noon (UK time) on 23 June 2025

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

# Foreword

Thank you for your interest in a 2-year apprenticeship as an Apprentice Solicitor in the Northern Ireland Assembly (the Assembly). The 2-year apprentice solicitor programme starts on 1 September 2025.

The Assembly operates in a dynamic political and parliamentary environment, and as a member of the Legal Services Office (LSO) you will have an opportunity to make an important and valued contribution to the work of the Assembly at Parliament Buildings.

Working at the Assembly offers a rewarding career. This is an exciting opportunity to join a high-profile organisation with a dedicated and inclusive team. LSO is an integral part of the Legal, Governance and Research Directorate. The function of LSO is to provide specialised, in-house legal advice and assistance to the Assembly, the Speaker, Assembly Committees, the Assembly Commission, the Clerk/Chief Executive and other senior staff.

The Assembly offers successful applicants for the Apprentice Solicitor post a competitive salary and a 50% contribution to academic fees. It also offers excellent pension provision.

The successful applicants will have an annual leave allocation of 25 days, increasing by one day after one year, as well as 12 days of public and privilege holidays and a range of [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 Simon Kelly at [simon.kelly@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:simon.kelly@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 makes laws, scrutinises the work of the Executive and represents the views of the public. It is the prime source of authority in respect of all devolved responsibilities.

The **Assembly Commission** enables the successful operation of the Assembly by providing the staff, services and facilities which are needed to support parliamentary business. The Assembly Commission is a body corporate, comprising the Speaker and five Members of the Assembly. The Assembly Commission delegates the day-to-day running of the Assembly to the Clerk/Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The priorities of the Assembly Commission, as set out in its [Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2028](#), are that:

- The Assembly will be empowered to achieve its full potential.
- The public will understand and value the role of the Assembly and be engaged in its work.
- Our staff will be a motivated, resilient and expert team.
- Our systems and facilities will be modern, secure and efficient.

The Assembly Commission is a high-achieving and professional organisation, providing impartial support to the Assembly and its Members.

The Assembly Commission has approximately 400 staff and an annual budget of £67m. It is independent of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The Commission's organisational structure is illustrated on the [recruitment website](#).

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## **Apprenticeship Opportunity**

LSO is offering a solicitor apprenticeship. The successful candidate will be contracted to undertake a 2-year apprenticeship\* within LSO.

[\* Note – the formal 2-year apprentice solicitor programme starts on the 1 September 2025]

**A permanent position will not be offered to the apprentice solicitor after this period.**

## **About the Role**

LSO is an integral part of the structure of the Assembly Commission and currently comprises a Director, Head of Legal Services, 8 Legal Advisers, a Personal Secretary and a Clerical Officer. Its role is to provide a specialist in-house legal advice service, independent of government, to support the Assembly in its scrutiny and legislative roles. It also provides advice on corporate matters to the Assembly Commission. LSO represents the Assembly and Assembly Commission in proceedings before courts, tribunals and inquiries.

The main areas of work in which the LSO is involved are as follows:

### ***Advice on legislation***

Advising the Speaker, and senior officials on his behalf, on issues arising in primary legislation and Bills introduced for enactment as primary legislation. A key part of this role is providing advice on whether a Bill is within the 'legislative competence' of the Assembly, including advice on that Bill's compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights and the Windsor Framework on the application of certain European Union ('EU') law in Northern Ireland.

### ***Advice on corporate matters***

Facilitating the lawful discharge of the Assembly Commission's functions as a statutory public body employing c.350 people and procuring a range of services from third parties. Providing legal advice on the full range of corporate legal

issues, including the intra vires exercise of powers, equality and non-discrimination law, employment law, contract and procurement law, and information and data protection law.

### ***Advice on parliamentary legal issues***

Providing advice and support on legal issues across the full range of parliamentary work carried out by the Assembly and its committees.

### ***Advice on drafting***

Providing a range of drafting support and drafting services to corporate and procedural clients: preparing contractual documents, statutory rules for the Assembly Commission, and amendments to the standing orders of the Assembly, as well as advising committees of the Assembly on the text of proposed amendments to primary legislation.

### ***Managing and directing litigation***

Managing all litigation on behalf of or against the Assembly and Assembly Commission.

Apprentice Solicitors will work on litigation in which LSO represents the Assembly Commission.

## **The Person**

You will have worked effectively within a team, and will be expected to work collaboratively within LSO. You will have the ability to quickly build new working relationships and communicate clearly and effectively as you carry out your role.

You must also be willing and keen to adopt a client facing focus, as you engage with a wide range of people involved within business at Parliament Buildings.

An Apprentice Solicitor will be provided with a Master, a solicitor with whom the applicant will serve their Apprenticeship, appointed within LSO. The Apprentice Solicitor must contact the Master in good time before the deadline set by the Law Society to complete all relevant documents which must then be lodged with the

Law Society.

## **Core Responsibilities**

- 1) Undertake research on the legislative competence of the Assembly, and draft advice for the Master and the Head of Legal Services on legislative competence issues.
- 2) Prepare research papers, supervised by the Master, for consideration by the Head of Legal Services and Director of Legal Governance and Research Service.
- 3) Supervised by the Master, take instructions from the Commission's Human Resources (HR) office on at least one employment issue, and develop and present advice on the matter(s) to HR.
- 4) Supervised by the Master, take instructions from the Commission's Procurement Office on contractual or procurement issues, and develop and present advice.
- 5) Carry out research on, and provide draft advice on requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('FOIA') or UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- 6) Draft advice to the Master and Head of Legal Services on the application of exemptions in the statutory scheme under one or more FOIA/ GDPR issues.
- 7) Assist the Master in preparing advice to the Committee on Procedures on amendments to standing orders and draft those amendments.
- 8) Assist the Master in advising the Commission on its statutory functions under section 40 of the 1998 Act and attend relevant Assembly Commission meetings.
- 9) Support the Master in advice to the Speaker and Committees on issues of sub judice, contempt of court, and defamation law.
- 10) Support the Master in advising committees (particularly the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee) on new EU acts and replacement EU acts.
- 11) To assist the LSO by providing weekly briefings in respect of legal issues arising in the ongoing work of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

- 12) To undertake such other reasonable duties which may from time to time arise.

## **Essential Criteria**

In order to be considered for this apprenticeship opportunity, applicants must, by the closing date for applications:

1. Hold or are predicted to achieve a first or bachelor's degree of minimum 2.1 classification (or equivalent).

**AND**

2. Be in receipt of an offer of a place at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS) or be on the waiting list for a place at the IPLS.

**AND**

3. Provide evidence in their application form and demonstrate at interview the following-

(a) A knowledge of constitutional and administrative law in Northern Ireland.

(b) A knowledge of human rights law.

(c) An understanding of the political and institutional relationships in which the Northern Ireland Assembly operates.

**AND**

4. Demonstrate experience of working effectively as part of a team.

## **Shortlisting Criteria**

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

Planning and organising workload using own initiative to deliver high quality work to deadlines.

## **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.

### **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 vary: when not attending the IPLS the Apprentice Solicitor will attend Parliament Buildings for at least four days each week and additional office attendance will be governed by business 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 Monday 23 June 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, Ability, 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**

### **Online Testing**

Online testing may be used as a shortlisting tool. Invitation to test does not imply that an applicant possesses the essential criteria. The test will be held online and instructions and further information will be issued to applicants after the closing date for applications. Only those applicants who meet the minimum standard and who score highest in the test, will be considered for the next stage of the selection process: the eligibility sift.

**Online testing (if required) is planned for week commencing: 23 June 2025**

### **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 above 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. The subject of the presentation will be advised to the applicant on the day of the interview and the applicant will be expected to present information to the selection panel.

**Interviews are planned for week commencing: 21 July 2025**

## **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](mailto: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.

As an equal opportunities employer, we are happy to talk about the possibility of flexible working in this role with the successful applicant.

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

## **Terms and Conditions of Appointment**

This is a 2-year fixed term 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 when not attending the IPLS 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 normally remain “live” for 18 months from the date it is signed and may be used to fill any further fixed term 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](mailto: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.**