

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

NORTHERN IRELAND

ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland:

I am pleased to announce today the formation of the Public Service Commission for Northern Ireland. Government's decisions on the Review of Public Administration, which announced on 22 November 2005, will require substantial transfers of staff to new organizations in the Health, Education and Local Government fields. I am very conscious of the major implications of these changes for staff working in these areas, including those in Central Government and I wish therefore to repeat my earlier commitment that I will seek to avoid compulsory redundancies and to safeguard the interests of staff. I also repeat the commitment that Government will work closely with the trade unions representing public service staff.

In November I therefore announced my intention to establish a Public Service Commission.

The proposed role of the Northern Ireland Public Service Commission will be:-

“to make recommendations to government on the guiding principles and steps necessary to safeguard the interests of staff and to ensure their smooth transfer to new organizations established as a consequence of government decisions on the Review of Public Administration, taking into account statutory obligations, including those arising from section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998”.

The Commission will be independent of Government. Although not a statutory body I wish to make it clear that the Government attaches the highest importance to the Commission’s role and the significance of its advice and recommendations. In establishing this independent Commission, Government is wholly committed to the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission consistently across the public sector. All Government Departments and public bodies will be expected to co-operate with the Commission, in the provision of information and in the implementation of its advice and recommendations as approved by Government. In the exceptional event that it could not accept a recommendation the Government would publicly explain the policy reasons why it felt unable to accept the Commission’s advice.

I would expect the Commission’s advice to me to be in the public domain. In formulating its recommendations the Commission will be expected to develop direct links with employers, existing sectoral Commissions and relevant trade unions.

The membership of the Commission draws on the expertise of existing organizations across the various sectors. I am delighted that Sid McDowell has agreed to Chair the Commission and that the following have agreed to serve:

Sid McDowell	(Civil Service Commissioner, ex chair of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and retired trade union official).
Brian Hanna	(Chair Local Government Staff Commission and retired local government official).
Professor Bernard Cullen	(Chair Education and Library Board Staff Commission and Professor of Philosophy Queen's University Belfast).
Judith Eve	(Chief Civil Service Commissioner and retired university academic).
Dr Collim Patton	(Retired HSS Trust Chief Executive).
Dessie Mitchell	(Retired local government official and member of Review of Public Administration Panel).
Jim McCusker	(Retired trade union official).