



**An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance**

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Circular 36/2006: Appointment in the Office of the Ombudsman for Children – Investigator, (Assistant Principal Officer Grade)



ombudsman
for children : do leanaí

A Dhuine Uasail

1. Applications are sought from officers **currently serving in the grade of Assistant Principal Officer** for appointment to the post of Investigator in the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

General Information:

2. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children was established under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002. The Office has a dual function of promoting children's rights (advocacy role) and investigating complaints against public bodies, schools and hospitals. Complaints are made directly by children or adults on their behalf. Because of this duality of function, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children is not only a redress board but a human rights institution which has an important role to play as a national monitor of children's rights and part of the reporting mechanism to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Details of the work of the Office are available on the website www.oco.ie.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children is located in Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1.

The Post

3. The Office was established in April 2004. The purpose of this post is to ensure that the Ombudsman for Children fulfils her role under sections 8 -13 of the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002. This refers to the independent investigation of complaints against public bodies, schools and voluntary hospitals. The Act also provides for the child proofing of legislation and the monitoring and reviewing of legislation concerning matters that relate to the rights and welfare of children.

The Ombudsman for Children may, on her own initiative or at the request of a Government Minister, give advice on any matter relating to the rights and welfare of children. In this regard a systemic pattern identified through the complaints and investigations function may influence a submission or special report to the Oireachtas.

There are eight staff in the Office, with two dedicated to the Complaints and Investigation function at present. The Investigator will work very closely with the Ombudsman for Children and with the other members of the team.

Job Specification

4. The Investigator's role will include:

- The examination and investigation of complaints presented to the Ombudsman for Children in the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002;
- Working face to face with both children and adults when reviewing and or investigating complaints;
- The development of practice and procedures that are child-centred and accessible to children. Children and young people will participate in the ongoing development of such procedures;
- Ongoing development and review of policies, practice and procedures, both internal and external that are child-centred in relation to complaints;
- A child-centred and human rights approach to investigations.

Above all, a commitment to promoting the rights of children and young people without prejudice.

Person Specification

5. The nature of the work in this Office is child-centred. A commitment to working with children and young people under the age of eighteen is essential. Many of the complaints are complex, involving children and their extended family situations. The individual should be capable of evaluation or analysis of complex and sensitive issues.

Skills Required:

(i) Objective Analytical Skills

An Investigator must be able to objectively analyse and evaluate a wide range of complex information, identifying the salient issues and logically integrating alternative positions, and be able to research comparative data, cross reference information and record the findings. An Investigator must also demonstrate a willingness to question given or accepted practices and to recognise the value of new or independent points of view. It is also important to take a more strategic view of the complaints. When there is a systemic problem or issue, it is expected that a critical analysis and report be produced for submission to the Oireachtas and/or for publication.

(ii) Work Management Skills

An Investigator must have the ability to organise and schedule work in a timely and resource-efficient manner taking into account future objectives and cost implications.

It is essential to be able to effectively discharge delegated work and to delegate tasks, where appropriate, to anticipate obstacles to task completion and to handle problems in a well-organised manner.

(iii) Attention to detail:

An Investigator must be thorough in maintaining accurate records and following appropriate investigative procedures generally and on a case-by-case basis, as directed by the Ombudsman for Children. It is necessary to adopt a careful approach to information handling, ensuring that all the relevant information on an issue is assessed and checked for consistency and completeness.

(iv) Commitment to Achievement

An Investigator must demonstrate commitment and a willingness to work in a child-centred way, at different levels, ensuring that work is completed to a high standard. An Investigator must learn from previous experience, take a positive approach to change and strive to improve the quality of his/her own performance. An Investigator must be committed to meeting and setting standards of best practice in the area of complaints and investigations.

(v) Interpersonal Effectiveness

An Investigator must be able to establish good relationships with a wide range of people. Many children and families are distressed when they make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children. It is essential that the person be sensitive to the effect of unresolved disputes on those involved and to be able to handle conflict constructively. An Investigator must be assertive in resisting pressure while maintaining amicable relations and must not allow him/herself to be directed away from important issues. An Investigator must be able to pose difficult questions, including to more senior personnel and to constructively question others without causing offence. An effective Investigator needs to be able to elicit relevant information and demonstrate an impartial approach. Teamwork is critical to ensure that there is a synergy between the three Office functions: Complaints and Investigation, Communication and Participation, and Research and Policy.

Conditions of Appointment

7. A member of staff of the Ombudsman for Children shall be a Civil Servant in the Civil Service of the State. Successful candidates must be in a position to take up duty without undue delay.

8. The appointee will be initially seconded to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children for a 6 month probationary period and will continue to have access to promotional opportunities in his/her parent Department and to interdepartmental competitions in the Civil Service. It is envisaged that an

appointee will require relevant training during the first 3 months and this will be provided by the Office.

9. The assignment will be subject to review within the 6 month probationary period. During this probationary period, the appointee will be assessed by their manager to determine whether s/he has the skills set out in the Job Specification and;

- has demonstrated the capacity to undertake the duties of Investigator
- has performed the duties in a satisfactory manner,
- has been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- is suitable from the point of view of health, with particular regard to sick leave.

10. Following this 6 month trial period, and subject to the agreement of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, the officer will be:

- appointed to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children on a permanent basis, or
- returned to the officer's parent Department,
or
- where the officer's parent Department is decentralising in full, assigned to an alternative Dublin-based Department/Office

11. As a permanent member of staff in the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, the officer will have access to internal competitions in the Office and interdepartmental competitions for which they would be otherwise eligible.

12. Due to the nature of the work and the size of the organisation, this post requires an officer who is immediately capable of full time attendance.

13. Appointment to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children requires clearance from the Garda Síochána Central Vetting Unit

Selection Process

14.1 Should it prove necessary, a screening may be employed to compile a short list of applicants to be invited to interview, and/or

14.2 Preliminary interviews may be held to identify the stronger candidates for final interview.

14.3 Final Selection will be by means of a competitive interview conducted by the Public Appointments Service.

15.1 Interviews will be conducted by a board, or boards, to be set up by the Public Appointments Service and the selection criteria will be based on the nature of the duties and the personal requirements for the position. The board conducting the competitive interviews will form a panel in order of merit.

- 15.2 The Personnel Officer will be required to certify that a candidate has worked well in his or her present post, has been satisfactory in general conduct and in respect of sick leave prior to the candidate being offered a position.
- 15.3 (In determining the order of merit at the interview, credit will be given for proficiency in both Irish and English in accordance with Department of the Public Service Circular 43/75 and Department of Finance Circular 30/90 to candidates qualified for the award of such credit by such date as may be determined by the Public Appointments Service. This means that credit for proficiency in both Irish and English is awarded when candidates are being placed in order of merit following the final stage of the competition.)

Codes of Practice

16. The recruitment and selection process for appointment to these positions will be conducted in accordance with the Code of Practice titled *Selection of Persons for Appointment on Promotion to Positions in the Civil Service (No. 02/04)* published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments.

The Code of Practice reflects the following core principles:

- *Probity*
- *Appointments Made on Merit*
- *An Appointments Process in Line with Best Practice*
- *A Fair Appointments Process Applied with Consistency*
- *Appointments Made in an Open, Accountable and Transparent Manner*

Candidates are advised to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Code of Practice including, inter alia, the provisions in relation to the responsibilities placed on candidates who participate in the recruitment and selection process.

17. Complaints and Requests for Review: Complaints/requests for review will be considered by the Public Appointments Service in accordance with the procedures set out in the Code of Practice.

18. The Code of Practice may be accessed by visiting www.cpsa-online.ie or by contacting directly the Commission for Public Service Appointments, Chapter House, 26-30 Upper Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

Circulation and further information

19. Personnel Sections should bring this Circular to the notice of all eligible officers serving in their Departments and associated Offices without delay, including eligible fixed term workers, officers on term time, contract, secondment, maternity leave, career break and any other relevant forms of leave. If candidates have any queries about this circular, they should contact their Personnel Section. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed to the Public Appointments Service.

20. The Civil Service is an equal opportunities employer. Promotion within the service is made on the basis of qualifications and the ability to carry out the responsibilities of the grade or post.

Applications

21. Application forms will be available on www.publicjobs.ie and must be returned by 1 December, 2006. This closing date must be strictly observed. An applicant who has not heard from the Public Appointments Service by 7 December, 2006 should contact that office immediately by phoning (01) 8587673. Applications must be made on-line directly to the Public Appointments Service by logging on to www.publicjobs.ie. The completed application form must be submitted so as to reach the Public Appointments Service, "Chapter House", 26 - 30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1, not later than 1 December, 2006. Applicants may attach a CV if they so wish.

22. Candidates should note that health and the level of sick leave are not verified until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment after the competitive interview stage. Admission to the competition, therefore, does not imply that a candidate meets the health and sick leave criteria. In considering a candidate's suitability for appointment in terms of health and sick leave, the Public Appointments Service will have regard to the Department of Public Service Circular 34/76, as amended by Department of Finance Circulars 32/91, 33/99 and 17/03.

23. Candidates with doubts about any aspect of their eligibility are advised to clarify their position with their Personnel Section before proceeding with the application.

24. Interviews are expected to take place the week beginning 11th December 2006. The onus is on candidates to make themselves available for interview at short notice. If candidates have not been contacted by the Public Appointments Service by 7 December 2006 they should contact that Office at (01) 858 7673.

Information on Panels

25. The information on panels formed as a result of these competitions will be available to Personnel Officer of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and Careers and Appointments Section in the Department of Finance. In addition, candidates will be asked to agree to the same information being made available to the relevant civil service unions for the purpose of monitoring the operation of the scheme.

For additional information, you may contact Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children on Tel. +353 1 8656 800.