



Department of

**Finance**

An Roinn

**Airgeadais**

[www.finance-ni.gov.uk](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk)

# **Special Advisers Annual Report**

**1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020**

**Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under Section 6 of  
the Civil Service (Special Advisers) Act (Northern Ireland) 2013**

**By the Department of Finance**

**On 3 July 2020**

In accordance with Section 6 of the Civil Service (Special Advisers) Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, the Department of Finance publishes an annual report containing the number and costs of special advisers. For the first time, we are expanding the report to include greater details about salaries and also relevant interests. This information will become a regular part of this publication.

## **Introduction**

Special advisers are a critical part of the team supporting Ministers. Their employment adds a political dimension to the advice and assistance available to Ministers while reinforcing the political impartiality of the permanent Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) by distinguishing the source of political advice and support.

They are part of the team, working closely alongside other civil servants to deliver Ministers' priorities. They can help Ministers on matters where the work of government and Ministers' party responsibilities overlap and where it would be inappropriate for other civil servants to become involved. They are an additional resource for the Minister, providing advice from a standpoint that is more politically committed than would be available to a Minister from the NICS.

Special advisers are temporary civil servants appointed under Article 3 of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 as amended. They stand outside the departmental hierarchy but work collaboratively with civil service colleagues supporting the Ministers who have appointed them and the Executive as a whole.

## **New arrangements for Special Adviser appointments**

For most of the 2019/20 reporting period there was no Assembly.

On 11 January 2020 a new Executive was formed and strengthened transparency and governance arrangements for the appointment of special advisers were put in place implementing commitments in the New Decade, New Approach document.

The Code of Conduct for special advisers can be accessed at [www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/special-adviser-appointments](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/special-adviser-appointments).

The strengthened rules for special advisers include:

- Pay is capped and set independently by Department of Finance officials.
- Ministers are responsible for the appointment, conduct and discipline of special advisers.
- Details of gifts and hospitality, meetings with external organisations, and pay to be published.

## **Special Advisers' Pay**

The scheme for the Remuneration of special advisers transfers responsibility for determining pay to Department of Finance officials, as this department has overall responsibility for determining pay policy and conditions of employment for NICS employees.

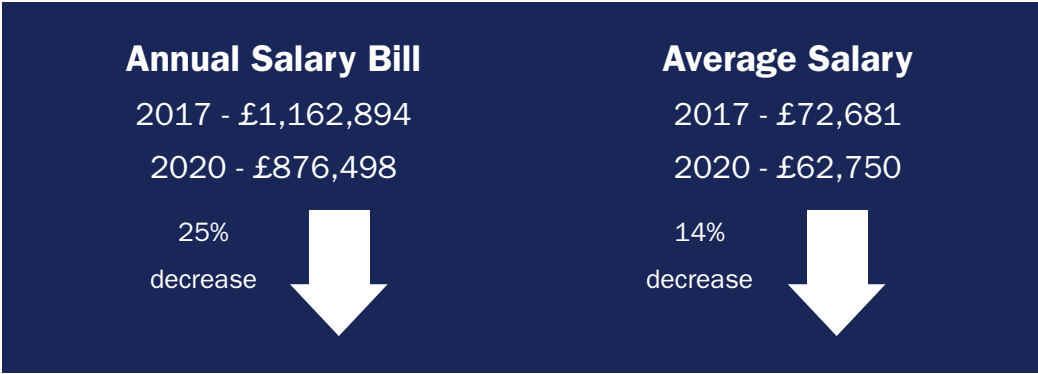
The Minister of Finance has no involvement in the setting of salaries of special advisers.

Under new remuneration arrangements, three pay bands were established for special advisers with the maximum in the highest pay band limited to £85k per annum.

No special adviser will earn more than a Minister in the Executive and special advisers who leave their post will not receive severance pay if they take up another publicly-funded role for the duration of the period which is covered by the severance.

In line with the new strengthened transparency and governance arrangements, in February 2020 the Department published the names and salaries of the special advisers appointed.

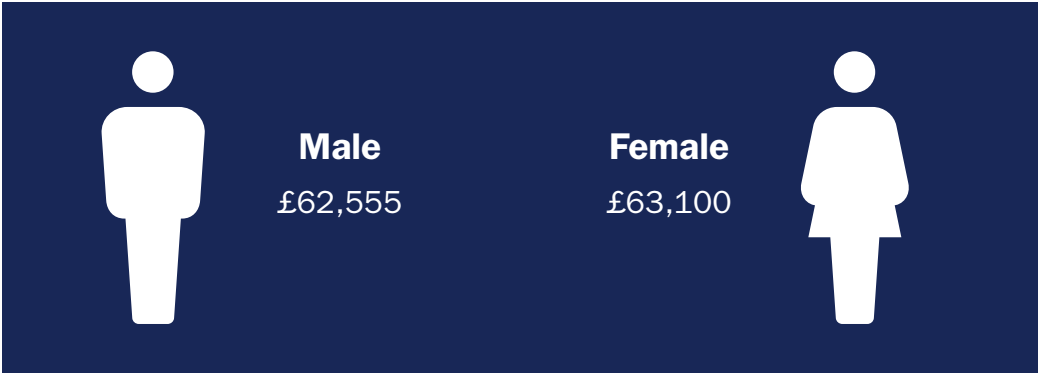
These new arrangements saw a 25% decrease in the annual salary bill compared to the 2017 bill and a 14% decrease in the average salary for special advisers.



**Special Adviser Pay Bands**

- PB1. Up to £54,999
- PB2. £55,000 – 69,999
- PB3. £70,000 – 85,000

**Special Adviser Gender Average Salary**



The average salary for female special advisers during 2019/20 was higher than the average salary for male special advisers.

**Cost of Special Advisers**

Salary Costs	£156,019.21
Employer National Insurance Contributions	£20,141.47
Employer Pension Contributions	£49,022.28
Overall Total	£225,182.96

There were no severance payments made.

## List of Special Advisers

As at 31 March 2020, there were 14 special advisers. A list of the advisers and their pay band and individual salaries if in pay bands 2 or 3 is below.

Department	Name	Pay Band (PB)	Salary (if PB 2 or 3)
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Mark Beattie	PB 1	
Communities	Ronan McGinley	PB 1	
Economy	Alastair Ross	PB 2	£65,000
Education	Peter Martin	PB 2	£60,000
Finance	Eoin Rooney	PB 1	
Health	Mark Ovens	PB 2	£60,000
Infrastructure	Tanya McCamphill	PB 1	
Justice	Claire Johnson	PB 1	
Executive Office	Stephen McGlade	PB 3	£78,000
Executive Office	Dara O'Hagan	PB 3	£78,000
Executive Office	John Loughran	PB 2	£67,000
Executive Office	Philip Weir	PB 3	£78,000
Executive Office	Emma Little-Pengelly	PB 3	£78,000
Executive Office	Kim Ashton	PB 1	

## Special Advisers' Declarations of Interest

As with all civil servants, special advisers must ensure that no conflict arises, or could be perceived to arise, between their public duties and their private interests, financial or otherwise.

Upon appointment, a Declaration of Interest form is completed by every special adviser and a copy of this is passed to the Department of Finance. In addition, each Department is also required to provide an assurance that appropriate action has been taken or arrangements have been put in place, in respect of individual interests, to avoid any conflict.

The special advisers' relevant interests can be viewed on pages 5 and 6 of this report.

## Special Advisers' Relevant Interests (2019/20)

<b>Emma Little Pengelly</b> <b>The Executive Office</b>	Barrister (non-practising), member of the Inns of Court (NI). Husband is Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health.
<b>John Loughran</b> <b>The Executive Office</b>	No relevant interests.
<b>Stephen McGlade</b> <b>The Executive Office</b>	Member of Unison. Member of Queen's Graduate Association. Member of the Centre for European Law, Trinity College. Member of the Committee on the Administration of Justice.
<b>Dara O'Hagan</b> <b>The Executive Office</b>	No relevant interests.
<b>Philip Weir</b> <b>The Executive Office</b>	Medical practitioner registered with the General Medical Council. Wife works as a General Practitioner and employee of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. Income from small farm holding.
<b>Kim Ashton*</b> <b>The Executive Office</b>	Employed by Agrihealth (NI) Ltd, immediately prior to appointment as a special adviser. Councillor, Mid Ulster District Council. Secretary, Crilly Cultural and Youth Group.
<b>Mark Beattie</b> <b>Department of Agriculture, Environment &amp; Rural Affairs</b>	Member of the National Trust. Member of Glenarm Estate. Member of the Greenmount Association (CAFRE). Father is a farmer in receipt of farm payments from DAERA. Relatives and close connections who work in the agri-food sector, including but not limited to primary production and agri-technology.

\* Resigned from post on 4th May 2020

**Ronan McGinley**  
**Department for Communities**

Member, Board of Governors for St Patrick's Primary School, Ardboe.  
Vice Chair, Ardboe Community Projects.  
Non-playing Member of Ardboe GAC.  
Former Councillor, Mid Ulster District Council.  
Employed by Start 360 and Board Member BID 2 immediately prior to appointment as special adviser.

**Alastair Ross**  
**Department for the Economy**

Immediately prior to employment as a special adviser I provided consultancy services to Weber Shandwick, was a UK Electoral Commissioner and was on the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

**Peter Martin**  
**Department of Education**

On a career break from Belfast Metropolitan College.  
Two children attend Primary School.  
Former Councillor, Ards and North Down Borough Council.

**Eoin Rooney**  
**Department of Finance**

Brother is a Civil Servant and mother is a health professional.

**Mark Ovens**  
**Department of Health**

No relevant interests.

**Tanya McCamphill**  
**Department for Infrastructure**

No relevant interests.

**Claire Johnson**  
**Department of Justice**

Member of the Committee on the Administration of Justice.  
Partner's father is Chair of the Probation Board.