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Our reference: FOI/13/18

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 13 July. In it you requested the following information:

- i. *The procedure you follow in auditing recruitment policies and practices in Departments.*
- ii. *The dates and findings of your most recent audits of the Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice.*

I am dealing with this request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In response to your first question, under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 the Commission must carry out whatever reviews of recruitment policies and practices it thinks are necessary to establish that the statutory requirement of recruitment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition is being upheld. We do this through a yearly audit of the recruitment policies and practices of Government departments and agencies to posts below Senior Civil Service Pay Band 2. Appointments to the Civil Service at Pay Band 2 above are chaired by Civil Service Commissioners. The Commission's procedure for departmental audit is described on the Commission's website as follows:

The Commission's overall objective is to ensure that departments' and agencies' recruitment systems are designed and operated in accordance with the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 and the Recruitment Principles.

The Commission, or its representatives, may examine any part of departments' and agencies' recruitment systems, if necessary down to the details of an individual competition, to ensure that they are compliant with the Act and the Recruitment Principles. Compliance monitoring is undertaken on behalf of the Commission by our contractor KPMG.

The approach to recruitment compliance monitoring emphasises the responsibility of departments and agencies for ensuring the Commission's requirements are met. The key stages are:

Stage 1: Self assessment

Departments and agencies complete an annual self-assessment of their compliance with the Recruitment Principles, including a description of the recruitment controls and checks they have in place. The self-assessment should also incorporate an action plan outlining areas for development where they have been identified.

This assessment includes factual information on the number of appointments made. Departments and agencies may highlight examples of innovative approaches to recruitment which have been successfully employed. The self-assessment is supported by an example of a real competition and underpinned by a compliance statement signed by the department's Permanent Secretary or agency's Chief Executive.

Stage 2: Risk analysis

The self-assessment and the example of a competition are reviewed on a risk basis by the Commission's representatives, who assess the evidence and award a high, medium or low marking to indicate the level of risk.

Stage 3: On-site visits

Over 20 on-site visits to departments and agencies are conducted by the Commission. Not only do they monitor compliance but they also note good practice with the aim of producing a guide for wider distribution. The Commission wants to ensure that eventually all departments and agencies are visited over a 3 to 4 year period. Organisations that have been initially assessed as high risk are always visited.

The Commission will usually begin an on-site with a discussion with the HR Director and/or nominated senior HR colleagues involved in the department or agency's recruitment policies and practices.

The Commission examines documentation on recruitment, including individual campaigns and reports on internal monitoring exercises. The Commission will also view records of any external appointments made outside the normal requirement of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. At the end of the visit, the Commission highlights the key findings and states its assessment of the overall level of risk.

Please note that the 2013-14 audit round, which is still ongoing, is the first to have been carried out on the Commission's behalf by KPMG. From 1995 to 2012 the contractor was DLA Piper and there were some minor differences in the audit procedure.

The recruitment practice of both Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Justice was most recently audited in the 2011-12 compliance round, which concluded in November 2012. This audit found the Cabinet Office to be high risk in relation to the Recruitment Principles (due to concerns about the validity of the audit trail and statistical data presented) and the Ministry of Justice to be medium risk.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Clare Salters
Chief Executive
Civil Service Commission
Room G/08
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

e-mail: clare.salters@csc.gsi.gov.uk

You should note that the Civil Service Commission will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Civil Service Commission. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Sean Edwards-Playne
Communications and Case Officer