

Civil Service Commission

Business Plan 2019/20

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities are focused on:

- Demographic diversity of the Civil Service
- Diversity of skills
- Supporting the delivery of government business
- Supporting employment initiatives

Set out below in more detail are each of the four strategic priorities, current baselines where appropriate and what actions we plan to undertake to influence positive change. These actions can be grouped into three different types: transactional; education, advice; and, information, data & challenge.

PRIORITY ONE

Helping the Civil Service to improve the demographic diversity of its people: in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age and socio-economic background.

HOW CAN WE INFLUENCE POSITIVE CHANGE?

As Civil Service Commissioners we have a role for setting standards for recruitment into the civil service. So it is important that we understand how the current levels of inclusion of each of the above, and other, diversity characteristics can be influenced to get the balance closer to the UK population. We have, so far, identified a number of strategic options and approaches we could use to enhance our knowledge base and allow us to undertake and

share our analysis and learning with recruiters and HR professionals in the civil service.

These include:

Transactional:

- Work more closely with and learn more from other sectors, including from our own Commissioners experiences;

Education and advice:

- undertake thematic reviews to better understand current or emerging trends that are identified through, for example: the competitions we chair; feedback from candidates and recruiters; regional data trends;
- researching what happens when people get into the Civil Service - what stops them progressing to the higher levels;
- develop mechanisms for effectively sharing best practice

Information, data & challenge:

- gathering evidence and data on candidates perception of recruitment into the Civil Service;
- ensuring that we as Commissioners are challenging at planning stages what is being done to attract and encourage more diversity applications and whether it is enough;
- where there are gaps or concerns we will consider delaying or stopping competitions.

We will continue to monitor changes to statistics through both national and regular publications as well as through our own sampling at times. We do not intend to be a passive stakeholder hoping things get better and so we will amend our approach if improvements are neither significant, timely or sustained.

PRIORITY TWO

Helping the Civil Service to improve the diversity of its skills base: more commercial, digital, project planning skills etc., and career paths and opportunities to move into leadership roles for those with other sets of experience than classic Civil Service policy backgrounds.

HOW CAN WE INFLUENCE POSITIVE CHANGE?

Similarly to Priority One our role for setting standards comes into play here but perhaps more importantly so does the chairing of senior competitions by Commissioners. It is through providing early leadership of these competitions that our influence can be best brought to bear with our Commissioners championing:

Transactional:

- having an external panel member, with appropriate experience, when recruiting for specialist skills;
- selection panels that reflect, as far as possible, the diversity of the workforce;
- the use of multiple channels and sources of data when recruiting to specialist posts
- information and candidate packs where criteria are tied to the actual role; and
- support for external candidates being able to find out and understand more about the recruitment process that they will be undertaking;

Education\advice:

- discuss the merits of, and whether it should be mandatory to, have Heads or Deputy Heads of profession on panels;
- identify what alternatives to competency based applications could be considered and what different approaches might be best suited to which different situations;
- consider how an effective alumni network would allow the Civil Service to maintain a relationship with both leavers and returners;

Information, data & challenge:

- investigate whether the current exception period of 2 years continues to be appropriate.

PRIORITY THREE

Helping the Civil Service to get the right resources moved around the system to enable the country to face the biggest challenge in modern times - Brexit.

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT DEPARTMENTS?

Whilst we do not believe it is necessary to amend the current Recruitment Principles or add new Exceptions for Brexit we do recognise clarity of approach would be helpful. We have considered how best the Commission can support Departments with their recruitment to Brexit specific posts in the context of the likely scale and time pressures that will arise. In our consideration of the use of Exceptions we recognised that alternative methods, such as hiring contractors, were available to Departments to secure the necessary skills and experience. However, whilst we agree that at times that would be the right approach we would not want Departments to take that route because the recruitment process was, for example, too slow compared to the need.

Transactional:

- Our initial response will, therefore, be to develop a low burden, but rigorous, business case approach to enable departments to identify and seek multiple approvals at one time using the existing Exceptions;
- In order to maintain the integrity of the Recruitment Principles, and to provide for the necessary monitoring, Departments would be required to provide a schedule to the business case of the posts, including durations and salaries, for which they sought Exceptions.
- They would be required to notify the Commission as each post was filled confirming the terms and conditions were in line with the schedule.

Information, data & challenge:

- The Commission would likely take a dim view where Departments sought to amend the details of business cases already approved, or where multiple business cases were made over a short period.
- In the event of a failure to comply with the terms of a Brexit exception, or if other breaches occurred, any exception granted permission would be withdrawn.

PRIORITY FOUR

Helping the Civil Service with employment initiatives to provide opportunity to groups who are currently poorly served in the job market: prisoners and ex-offenders, ex-service personnel, young people from a range of disadvantaged backgrounds.

HOW CAN WE INFLUENCE POSITIVE CHANGE?

The main actors here have to be government Departments, as they are the employers, with the Cabinet Office (or another capable organisation) playing a coordinating role. The Workforce Plan contains an aspiration for the Civil Service to be the most inclusive employer in the UK, and the Civil Service is committed to developing a service-wide social mobility strategy. The Cabinet Office is keen to pilot work around ex-offenders before, potentially, looking to widen the initiative to include other disadvantaged groups.

Transactional:

- individuals would be recruited under the Commission's Exception 2 - support for government employment programmes Education\advice:
- the Commission would have a role to play in enabling the initiative and supporting it with positive messaging;
- we should be encouraging, and describing the use of, the Exception in this context as a positive development rather than a risk to recruitment on merit, etc.

Information, data & challenge:

- gather evidence to understand the degree of success through pilots;
- consider how success of pilots might be used to extend the initiative to other regions and to improve the prospects of other groups.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION CUSTOMER CHARTER

The Customer Charter is based on our statutory functions (all legislative references are to the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 unless otherwise stated), and details the ‘business as usual’ work undertaken by the Commission.

Section 9: Complaints by civil servants under the Civil Service Code	
1.1 We will handle all complaints made under the Civil Service Code in line with published guidance	<p><i>Acknowledge receipt within 3 working days.</i></p> <p><i>Complete initial assessment (whether it is within scope) within 15 working days.</i></p> <p><i>Decision Notice published on website.</i></p>
1.2 We will act as a source of advice and expertise on the Civil Service Code and values.	<i>Respond to 95% of departmental queries about Commission policies within 3 working days.</i>
Sections 10 & 11: Setting standards (in the Recruitment Principles) for selection for appointment to the Civil Service.	
2.1 We will run a series of training workshops for Departmental staff to increase understanding and awareness of the Recruitment Principles.	<i>Deliver, or contribute to, the equivalent of 2 events per month.</i>
2.2 We will act as a source of advice and expertise on recruitment to the Civil Service.	<i>Respond to 95% of departmental queries about Commission policies within 3 working days</i>
Section 12: Approving appointments (through competition or exception)	
3.1 Our chairing of senior selection panels will be consistent and pragmatic, adding value to Departments’ efforts and	<i>Commissioners allocated to competitions promptly following Departmental request (90% within 3 working days).</i>

<p>supporting them to identify the best candidates through a fair process and from a strong and diverse field.</p>	<p><i>Panel report (including diversity figures) normally delivered within 5 working days of the panel reaching its decision.</i></p> <p><i>Regular discussion of competition issues and insights at Board meetings, to share best practice and ensuring consistency of approach.</i></p>
<p>3.2 We will ensure that we meet the urgent business needs of Departments by responding flexibly and promptly to requests for exceptions to the normal arrangements for recruitment on merit following fair and open competition.</p>	<p><i>95% of Exception requests to be answered within 5 working days or less and to a standard that no reconsideration requests are required (provided all required information has been received).</i></p>
<p>Section 13: Complaints about selection for appointments</p>	
<p>4.1 We will handle all complaints made under the Recruitment Principles in line with published guidance, following up upheld complaints to support Departments in improving their recruitment practices.</p>	<p><i>Acknowledged within 3 working days.</i></p> <p><i>Complete initial assessment (whether it is within scope) within 15 working days.</i></p> <p><i>Complete all investigations within 3 months where possible.</i></p>
<p>Section 14: Compliance monitoring</p>	
<p>5.1 We will collect and analyse data on Departmental recruitment activity on a quarterly basis, to assess risk of Departments failing to recruit in line with the legal requirement for selection on merit following a fair and open competition.</p>	<p><i>Board to consider emerging trends from quarterly compliance monitoring reviews, ongoing. Six monthly status reports provided to the Board by the Chief Executive.</i></p>
<p>5.2 We will develop tailored programmes of</p>	<p><i>All 'poor' organisations; to be contacted by</i></p>

<p>support for high-risk departments to help improve their compliance and capability</p>	<p><i>August offering support and training. Interim audit/meeting to be held between September and December. Full audit to be held between January and March.</i></p> <p><i>All 'fair / at risk' organisations; to be contacted by August offering support and training, and again in January to check progress.</i></p>
<p>Section 17: Additional functions agreed with the Government</p>	
<p>6.1 We will review our policy relating to NDPB accreditation in discussion with the Cabinet Office and in parallel we will continue to review the recruitment practices of accredited NDPBs [on a three-yearly-cycle] and encourage a wider policy-led consideration of the scheme.</p>	<p><i>Maintain up to date NDPB accreditation process through the year.</i></p>
<p>6.2 <u>Senior Appointments Protocol</u>: We will chair selection panels for internal competitions at Permanent Secretary and Director General level, under the Senior Appointments Protocol, applying the same standards and pragmatism as we do for senior external competitions.</p>	<p><i>Commissioners allocated to competitions promptly following Departmental request (90% within 3 working days).</i></p> <p><i>Panel report (including diversity figures) normally delivered within 5 working days of the panel reaching its decision.</i></p> <p><i>Regular discussion of competition issues and insights at Board meetings, to share best practice and ensuring consistency of approach.</i></p>
<p>6.3 Promoting the Civil Service Code and values - we will continue to support Departments in promoting the Civil Service</p>	<p><i>Regular conversations with CSEP and Cabinet Office.</i></p>

Code and values, focusing particularly on support for the network of Nominated Officers.	<i>Deliver, or contribute to, the equivalent of 1 event per month (visits to departments targeted according to CS Survey scores).</i>
Schedule 1: Governance and accountability (including obligations under other legislation)	
7.1 We will agree a revised Memorandum of Understanding with the Cabinet Office along with SLA's for corporate services	<i>Negotiations ongoing with Cabinet Office</i>
7.2 We will organise at least one Open Event and look at ways of increasing our outreach to key stakeholders	<i>Open meeting to be arranged in February/March 2020.</i>
7.3 We will use our resources appropriately and efficiently, and account for it accurately and transparently, in line with the 2010 Act, Managing Public Money, the MoU and best practice for NDPB governance and transparency.	<p><i>Annual Report & Accounts laid before Parliament in July 2019 and in the Scottish Parliament & Welsh Assembly in similarly timely manner.</i></p> <p><i>Audit & Risk Committee, auditors and Cabinet Office Finance Director to be content with financial management arrangements.</i></p> <p><i>Regular publication of Board minutes and (where appropriate) papers.</i></p>
7.4 We will respond to requests for information in line with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998 and in accordance with Information Commissioner guidance.	<p><i>Acknowledge receipt within 3 working days.</i></p> <p><i>Respond to request within 20 working days unless extra time needed to consider the public interest under one of the relevant exceptions.</i></p> <p><i>If required, to complete consideration of public interest and provide a response</i></p>

	<i>within a further 20 working days.</i>
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