



## **Charity Commission**

### Audit Report

July 2024

# Contents

Executive Summary	3
Profile	3
Audit Findings	4
Good Practice	4
Areas for Improvement	4
Queries Raised	4
Breaches of the Recruitment Principles	4
Exceptions	4
Exception 1 Usage	5
Diversity, Innovation and SCS Recruitment	5
Diversity	5
Innovation	5
SCS Recruitment (including External by Default)	5
Conclusions and Recommendations	6
Management Action Plan	6
Moderation Meeting	6
Audit Rating	6
Our Classification Systems	7

## Executive Summary

The Civil Service Commission audits organisations to drive greater innovation and improvement in departmental practice, while ensuring the important principle of recruitment on merit, after fair and open competition remains the cornerstone of an effective and impartial Civil Service.

The new audit programme better reflects the differences in scale and the challenge of recruitment within the different departments and organisations that the CSC regulates.

For each audit the Commission requests evidence on 6 Campaigns, with each to include records related to:

- o the job advert;
- o the candidate pack;
- o the sift records (with scores);
- o the interview questions;
- o the interview scores (with feedback);
- o the appointment; and
- o the chair / panel report;

and:

- requests evidence on 6 Exceptions;
- issues a questionnaire related to diversity, innovation and SCS recruitment;
- identifies areas of concern; potential breaches to the Recruitment Principles; and clarifying evidence from the organisation required for the interim audit;
- discusses the above with each organisation at an audit meeting;
- moderates the final report with Civil Service Commissioners to include the department's Link Commissioner;
- issues the Final Audit Report with the audit rating to the organisation; and
- follows up recommendations with the organisation to ensure the actions have been addressed.

## Profile

The Charity Commission is a Non-Ministerial Department. Its role is to register and regulate charities in England and Wales to ensure that the public can support charities with confidence.

- **Headcount:** 475 (March 2024)
- **Appointments:** 35
- **Exceptions:** 21
- **SCS1 and SCS2 Commissioner led competitions:** 1

The Charity Commission's audit was in May 2024.

The Charity Commission Complexity Score is 2. This reflects a standard score for a small department, with low range and public profile. The organisation was content with this score.

The Charity Commission was fully engaged with the audit, providing good evidence throughout the process of information gathering and the audit meeting.

## Audit Findings

The audit reviewed six campaigns and six exceptions.

### Good Practice

The audit identified good evidence of efforts to keep the length of job adverts down to improve accessibility and readability.

### Areas for Improvement

The audit identified record-keeping errors and some mistakes made in job adverts. For example, in one of the campaigns, the interview records showed that a presentation was assessed, which was not part of the advertised process.

The audit also identified some instances of a lack of clarity on the criteria that candidates would be assessed against. The use of 'person specification' should be replaced with the use of clear 'essential criteria', and how the sift and interview will be assessed should be clearly stated.

### Queries Raised

- Use of desirable criteria

The Charity Commission responded that desirable criteria are used when decisions need to be made at longlisting and shortlisting stages to distinguish tied candidates. This is compliant with the Recruitment Principles.

### Breaches of the Recruitment Principles

The audit identified four Technical breaches:

1. Inconsistency in candidate information provided. The advert stated that shortlisting would take place based on the candidates' CVs and personal statements, but only the CVs were assessed.
2. Disparity between the essential criteria in the job advert and the criteria used to sift by a recruitment agency.
3. Candidates were assessed on a presentation which was not referenced in the job advert.
4. Merit order was not established accurately as tied candidates in the reserve list were not distinguished properly.

### Exceptions

The audit reviewed the following six exceptions:

- **Exception 1:** Grade 7 covering maternity leave for 9 months.

- **Exception 2:** HEO temporary appointment for 5 months. It was not practical to advertise a full competition for the short period.
- **Exception 3:** SEO temporary appointment for 14 months to cover additional work.
- **Exception 4:** EO temporary appointment for 12 months. Additional help on a new project to increase inbound calls and flexible correspondence.
- **Exception 5:** EO temporary appointment for 9 months. Additional help on a new project to increase inbound calls and flexible correspondence.
- **Exception 6:** EO temporary appointment for 6 months. Additional help on a new project to increase inbound calls and flexible correspondence.

## Exception 1 usage

- **Total (2023/24):** 18

Reasonable usage given the department's complexity. Several Exception 1 appointments were audited and evidenced Exception 1 was being used in line with its intended purpose (short duration of the role made a full competition impractical).

The Charity Commission keeps track of its Exceptions by using their HR finance system *Unify*. This indicates the start date, end date, and the Exception. The Charity Commission is satisfied this prevents breaches. They also have regular meetings to let people know when the end date is near.

## Diversity, Innovation and SCS Recruitment

### Diversity

It is a mandatory requirement for all of Charity Commission employees to complete the Civil Service Learning's 'Civil Service Expectations (CSE)' course which covers diversity and inclusion, The Equality Act 2010, the Civil Service code, and the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The Charity Commission is part of the Disability Confidence Scheme, and The Great Place to Work for Veterans Scheme.

The 'Approach to Diversity and Inclusion at the Charity Commission' states: *"We will continue to go further than the Equality Act provisions by adopting a broader definition of diversity, to include socio-economic and geographic backgrounds. This Diversity and Inclusion approach seeks to add value to the Charity Commission, contributing to its effectiveness as a fair, balanced and independent regulator while maximising employee well-being and engagement."*

### Innovation

At the offer stage, all candidates receive a workplace passport and 'keep warm' emails and calls from the recruitment and line managers.

### SCS Recruitment (including External by Default)

The Charity Commission has recruited one SCS role on the fair and open process. No External by Default exceptions were recorded.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Charity Commission had reasonably high levels of breaches for a department of its size, and reasonable usage of Exception 1. There was some evidence of implementing standard practices to promote diversity and similarly for innovation in recruitment practices. There were no concerns relating to SCS recruitment.

### Management Action Plan

The audit identified two recommendations:

	Recommendations	Priority	Implementation Date
1	The Charity Commission should take steps to ensure recruitment processes, outlined in job adverts, are consistent with the assessment process conducted.	High	December 2024
2	The Charity Commission should ensure that all campaigns, with tied candidates, are clearly distinguished between in the merit order.	Medium	December 2024

The Civil Service Commission will follow up with the organisation to ensure actions have been taken to address the recommendations.

### Moderation Meeting

The Moderation Meeting, held on 15 July 2024, recognised the Charity Commission's commitment to diversify their teams, particularly in specific locations where the department indicated actions already taken. This improved the department's rating score for diversity.

The meeting also recognised the Charity Commission's willingness to achieve compliance and best practice, noted in the Commissioner led competition.

### Audit Rating

The audit rating is determined by compliance (breaches and Exception 1 usage); positive actions (diversity and innovation) and SCS recruitment (including external by default and Commissioner insight). The weighting will also be determined by the department size – for example, larger departments will have more SCS staff than smaller departments who may not have any SCS staff.

	Breaches	Exception 1 Usage	Diversity	Innovation	SCS Recruitment
<b>Scale: 1-5</b>	2	3	3	2	5
<b>Weight (100%)</b>	40%	25%	10%	10%	15%
<b>Sub Score</b>	16	15	6	4	15
<b>Total Score</b>			56		
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Fair</b>				

## Our Classification Systems

### Complexity Score

- 5** **Most Complex** – the largest, most varied or currently most high-profile departments
- 4** **Complex** – a large, varied or a high-profile department
- 3** **Average Complexity** – smaller, more focused departments, with a medium range and public profile
- 2** **Less Complex** – small department, low range and public profile
- 1** **Least Complex** – smallest departments with tight and focused remits / range and public profile

### Considerations Informing Audit Rating

- Compliance, Exception Usage, Positive Action, and SCS Recruitment.

### Audit Ratings

<b>Good</b>	<b>70-100%</b>
<b>Fair</b>	<b>50-69%</b>
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>30-49%</b>
<b>Needs Regulatory Intervention</b>	<b>20-29%</b>

### Recommendations

Priority	Definition	Action Required
<b>High</b>	Non-compliance with the Recruitment Principles or the Civil Service Commission.	Remedial action must be taken taken urgently within an agreed timescale.
<b>Medium</b>	Impact on the legal requirement of the Recruitment Principles related to fair, open, and based on merit.	Remedial action should be prioritised within an agreed timetable.
<b>Low</b>	No, or minimal, impact on the legal Requirement of the Recruitment Principles related to fair, open, and based on merit.	Remedial action should be taken at earliest opportunity within an agreed timetable.