



## Home Office

### Audit Report

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## 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 Home Office is a ministerial department. Its role is to keep citizens safe and the country secure. The Home Office plays a fundamental role in the security and economic prosperity of the UK.

- **Headcount:** 51,020 (March 2024)
- **Appointments:** 11,414
- **Exceptions:** 2,667
- **SCS1 and SCS2 Commissioner led competitions:** 42

The Home Office's audit was in June 2024.

The Home Office's Complexity Score is 5. This reflects a standard score for the largest, most varied or currently most high-profile departments. The organisation was content with this score.

The Home Office showed strong engagement throughout the audit process and demonstrated openness towards the Commission's suggested areas for improvement.

## Audit Findings

The audit reviewed six campaigns.

### Good Practice

The Home Office recruitment records state a clear approach to tied candidates and establishing merit order for the benefit of panel members. Adverts clearly state what elements of applications would be scored. For example, adverts confirmed CVs would be used for information purposes only would not be scored. Candidate feedback evidenced objective assessment reflecting advertised criteria.

The Commission's prior approval was appropriately sought before converting an individual to permanency, in adherence to Exception conditions.

### Areas for Improvement

The audit identified that the department should make use of person specifications to detail the ideal candidate for the role, rather than listing responsibilities (which are better placed in the section for job description). Records showed incomplete areas of compulsory information.

The department should also clearly state how candidates will be assessed, against which criteria and what information will be used to do so.

### Queries Raised

- Why was having a driving licence listed as essential criteria for some campaigns audited?

The Home Office confirmed this was due to the role requiring travel between multiple sites, involving the transportation of heavy equipment using fleet cars.

### Breaches of the Recruitment Principles

No breaches were found during the audit. However, three Serious breaches for breaching Exception conditions and four Technical breaches arising from issues with following the advertised process recorded outside of the audit.

### Exceptions

The audit reviewed the following six exceptions:

- **Exception 1:** HEO temporary appointment for 21 months. Priority appointment to the Angiolini Inquiry.

- **Exception 2:** AO GFIE appointment for 9 months. Life Chances Programme.
- **Exception 3:** G7 Secondment for 6 weeks. Expertise required.
- **Exception 4:** G6 appointment for 2 years. Priority appointment to the Angiolini Inquiry.
- **Exception 5:** EO conversion to permanency. Kickstart.
- **Exception 6:** AO conversion to permanency. Increase in demand for passports.

## Exception 1 usage

- **Total (2023/24):** 1,693

Whilst this is a high level of Exception 1 usage, reasons for this include the department's recruitment of seasonal workforces and is further mediated in light of the department's complexity score.

The Home Office has a manual tracker which flags any end dates that might be coming up. The system restricts staff information therefore if their contract has ended then their information automatically gets removed. There are manual checks to ensure that all end dates are adhered to and the system records and manual records are compared to ensure that they match up.

## Diversity, Innovation and SCS Recruitment

### Diversity

The Home Office has a published D&I strategy. Statistics provided evidence that the department is working at, above or towards its target. Ethnic minority recruitment increased from 34.7% in 2020/21 to 45.9% in 2023/24, with increases also in the number of females, disabled and LGB+ candidates.

The department participates in two Life Chances schemes, offers two internship programmes, and recruits apprentices.

### Innovation

The Home Office uses AI chatbots, Live Chat and telephone to provide role-specific candidate support. It also delivers online 'day in the life' events, which include a useful Q&A session for prospective candidates.

### SCS Recruitment (including External by Default)

The Home Office had 5.6% of SCS appointments made to external candidates.

There was one ministerial exception to External by Default for a role requiring specialist skills and knowledge.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Home Office had a high number of breaches recorded even for a complex department. The department had high Exception 1 usage, although the Commissioner is aware of

reasons for this (for example, seasonal workforces). There was good evidence on diversity and evidence of innovation. There were no concerns relating to SCS recruitment.

## Management Action Plan

The audit identified two recommendations:

	Recommendations	Priority	Implementation Date
1	The Home Office should implement processes to ensure all exceptions are managed according to conditions set out in the Recruitment Principles, and should continue to approach the Commission for advice in cases of uncertainty.		December 2024
2	The Home Office should issue or reissue guidance to ensure panels know to follow the advertised process and state in job adverts how candidates will be assessed, against which criteria and what information will be used to do so.		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, noted the Home Office has largely been very engaged, constructive and thoughtful throughout the recruitment process. The department has had a change in Home Secretary, but continued to maintain high compliance despite the pressure.

## 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	4	4	4	4
<b>Weight (100%)</b>	40%	25%	10%	10%	15%
<b>Sub Score</b>	16	20	8	8	12
<b>Total Score</b>			64		
<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, SCS Recruitment; and Other

### 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.