

1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

To: All Permanent Secretaries

22 June 2026

Via email

Dear Permanent Secretary,

In light of a Fundamental Breach of the Recruitment Principles in one department, I am writing to remind you that Special Advisers must have no involvement in a Civil Service recruitment campaign. The rules apply to all government departments. You may wish to assure yourself that your officials are fully aware of the relevant rules.

Paragraph 58 of the Civil Service Recruitment Principles is clear that:

Under the [Constitutional Reform and Governance] 2010 Act, Special Advisers may not exercise any power in relation to the management of any part of the Civil Service. They may therefore not be involved in the recruitment of civil servants.

In this instance, the breach was the result of Special Advisers meeting with candidates during the recruitment process. Any contact between Special Advisers and candidates will be interpreted as a Fundamental Breach of the Recruitment Principles. It is essential that Special Advisers in your department are aware of this. It is also important that those working in ministerial private offices know that they should not be supporting or facilitating such contact. A Fundamental Breach may result in an immediate audit of your department to identify and address any underlying issues.

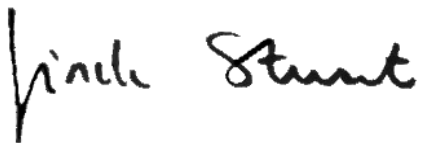
I have asked the Civil Service Commission to adjust its audits of departments to provide assurance that appropriate training is in place and can be evidenced. Any instance of a suspected breach of the Recruitment Principles must be notified to the Commission at the earliest opportunity. This is a requirement of both the Recruitment Principles and the Civil Service Code.

Appropriate ministerial involvement in Civil Service recruitment is outlined in paragraphs 39 to 43 of the Recruitment Principles, available online at the following web address:

<https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/document/02a-recruitment-principles-april-2018-final/>

If your department has any questions please contact my team.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gisela Stuart". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Gisela" and the surname "Stuart" clearly legible.

Gisela Stuart

First Civil Service Commissioner